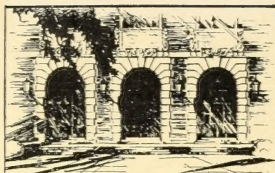




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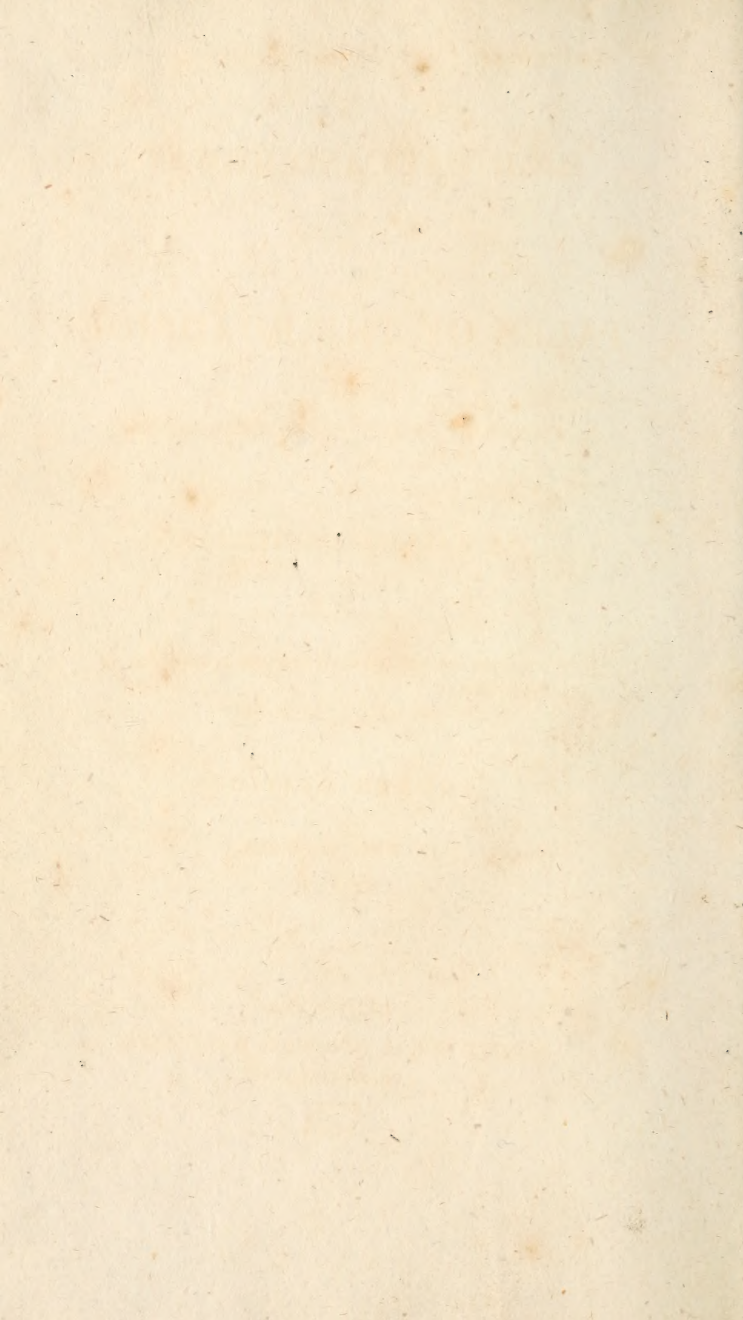
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HIGH-WAYS AND BY-WAYS;
OR
TALES OF THE ROADSIDE:

PICKED UP IN THE FRENCH PROVINCES,

BY

A WALKING GENTLEMAN.

“ I hate the man who can travel from Dan to Beersheba, and
say 'Tis all barren !” *Sterne.*

FOURTH EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:


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THE AUTHOR.



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PREFACE, PROLOGUE, AVANT-PROPOS,

OR

INTRODUCTION.

“ The nature of a preface is rambling, never wholly out of the way, nor in it.”

DRYDEN.

PREFACE, PROLOGUE, AVANT-PROPOS,

OR

INTRODUCTION.

If unencumbered men who travel for pleasure knew half the pleasures of travelling on foot, post-masters and carriage-owners would soon be left to the patronage of those who have the happiness, or the misery, of being married; to effeminate striplings, and old bachelors.

Who, with the life and spirit of youth within him, blessed with health, and sound in mind, would *choose* to waste his weary hours in the solitude of a post-chaise, or pay his money at a

diligence-office, in proportion to the speed which hurries him through all that might interest a rational man?

Who, with limbs to move on, and a heart to feel, would abandon the companionship of nature's self; encage his body in a public vehicle; and stifle the young buds of thought in its contracted atmosphere?

Can we expect to know a people by such flying association? Is it among travellers, every one of whom might on his journey doubt his own identity;—from the merchant counting on his fingers in the corner,—from the lover whose thoughts fly back in a direct ratio with the haste of his advance, and whose eyes are so full of his absent mistress, that he thinks he sees her in the gruff old lady, feeding her parrot on the seat before him;—is it from the friend, the parent, or the child, who, going to meet the

holy happiness of domestic welcome, thinks the carriage retrogrades;—is it from these the foreign traveller would look for national fact or individual reality; or in their random and undigested chatter hope to find a mine of sound and valuable truth?

No, no, sir! take your knapsack, and your stick, and walk! Linger, and lounge, and loiter on the way. Throw yourself among the people, as if you came by chance, and not from curiosity. Spend a day here, and a week there. Be generous, but not profuse. Excite gratitude, not envy. Let information flow in gushing springs, but do not strive to force it up by pumping. Do all this, and a little time will show you how wise you have become.

I am answered, perhaps, that time is not given to all men in the same profuseness; that where I have a year to spare, another may

have but a month. Then, I reply, spend your month with profit. Measure at the end of it the minds you have analysed, not the leagues you have driven over; and if you have but sauntered through one district of a foreign nation, in communion with the inhabitants, you are better informed than he who has galloped from Calais to Paris, and thence to Florence, Rome, and Naples.

But a crusty opponent might say that this is all labour in vain,—tell me that most men travel merely to talk of it*, or that “*Voyager est un triste plaisir* †,” cite the Scotch proverb, “Sen’ a fool to France, and he’ll come back a fool,”—quote, gravely, if he will,

* “La curiosité n’est que vanité; le plus souvent on ne veut savoir que pour en parler; on ne voyagerait pas sur mer pour ne jamais en rien dire, et pour le seul plaisir de voir, sans espérance de s’en entretenir avec personne.”

PASCAL.

† Madame de Staël.

“ Dans maint auteur, de science profonde,
J’ai lu qu’on perd à trop courir le monde *.”

and add to these authorities, that if the object is knowledge, it may be had at home ; that the external features of all countries pretty nearly resemble one another ; that towns and villages are composed of the same kind of materials ; and that man himself is every where the same, a two-legged animal without feathers. Why then go out of our way to explore the outward show of things, or even the nooks and crevices of human nature ?

Such reasoner would be quickly yelped at by the open-mouthed pack, which sweeps through foreign scenes, barking or baying at men or the moon ; and he would be stung by the drones who hum, and buzz, and flutter over all, but bring back not one drop of honey to the hive.

* Gresset.

Yet there is some justness in the cavil of my cynic. Nature *has* made all things of the same stuff, and distributed them in nearly the same proportions. Man, the great master-piece, *is* every where the same : five to six feet in height, and seventy years of life : four-limbed and two-handed ; with five senses, thirty-four cerebral organs, and one, two, or more ideas—as it may be. Such is his common form and medium definition. A straggling monster may now and then shock us as less, or startle us as more than man ; but the lover of miracle and marvel seeks in vain for a group of Cyclops, or a race of giants. The grosser works of the creation, too, are all confined within certain limits. Climate, indeed, is comparatively cold or hot ; but a fire or a pair of bellows can transport the mind, through the medium of the senses, from the frigid to the torrid zone, and *vice versâ*. Unsightly monsters, pillars, or even temples, may be brought to us by ships. We cannot,

to be sure, carry off mountains or rivers; but, if we will be satisfied with miniature models, let us turn to our own romantic hills and lovely streams, and we shall only want a magnifying glass to show us all that nature holds of the sublime and beautiful.

Yet all this is not enough, at least for us, who, laughing at the theories of the disparaging physiologists, believe man better than the brutes. To know him rightly, we must travel: not his stature, nor his deeds—description and history tell us these—but his mind and his feelings can be laid open, his resemblance to or contrast with ourselves be displayed, only by the actual intercourse of heart with heart, and soul with soul, when every artificial exhibition is gone by, and every cunning caution lulled to rest.

This is not to be done at home; at least I can never understand the biped of my own

locality. There I move as in a family circle. Every Englishman is a brother to the rest; and though one may grumble in a louder key, or another growl in a deeper tone, still the social resemblance is the same. I go into a distant county, and I meet new faces, but not one mind *seems* strange to me. I *fancy* I know all that passes in each round and honest-looking head; yet the brain within is often spreading a veil to keep its secrets from my view; and every idea coiling itself up like a rattlesnake, to hide its real extent, and hit me the hardest when I think myself most safe.

Thus it is, that by the confidence of the observer, and the caution of those he works on, by common resemblances and sympathies, we are as unable to know the character of our countrymen as we are to depict our own.

And in looking on the natural features of my country the analogy holds good. The land-

scape, the rosy cheeks, and fair complexions, seem all to have been growing up with me from earliest youth, and to be identified with every hour of my existence. Every thing is familiar, because it has been so long within my reach; and though I may be absent from my proper fire-side, still I have passed no line. I have slid on in harmony and in tune, from *dolce* to *forte*; from *major* to *minor*; from the subject to the variation, and back again; but in three or four days, at farthest, I can be sure of sitting in my own chair, and of poking my own poker between the bars of my own grate.

But let me cross the channel, and I feel instantly the magic of imagination. I already breathe freer, although still in sight of Dover. I am hotter, though the climate is the same. I tread cautiously, and pick my steps, although the roads be of the like materials, or the soils be similar. I see mortality around me—flourish-

ing, decaying, dead—just as I left it behind. I look in the faces before me. I pore over, search, and scrutinize. I mark on every hand a novelty or a wonder;—yet all the while I am reading in the same old book, only that it is decked up in a different binding. But so it is. We want this stimulus to give action to our mental energies; and we find as mighty a difference between man in England and man in France, as we do between a plain mutton-chop and a *cotelette à la maintenon*.

Let us then travel; and if we do so with our eyes open (I mean the eyes of the mind), we shall return home wiser than when we set out, but knowing nothing more than we might have known before we started. The sum of all is, the defectiveness of man. The knowledge that let *circumstances* debase him here, or elevate him there; let him show in this century his fair side, or in that his foul; he is still, in all seasons

and all climes, essentially the same ; thirsting and toiling for perfectibility, but doomed, by the very nature of the struggle, to prove his irredeemable imperfection.

As to the prejudice with which we are loaded, it is the disease of our nature. Every nation possesses the virus, but we inoculate with it. We nurture it as an antidote against something worse ; and on quitting England lay in a plentiful fund, as if it were an amulet,

Sans quoi le cœur, victime des dangers,
Revient chargé de vices étrangers.

But let us see our illiberality in its true light. It is the evil of isolation, and a tax paid for security. It is therefore, perhaps, neither a fault nor a misfortune. With its acknowledged possession we may safely say that, in many of the substantial advantages of life, we are superior

to our neighbours,—but are we so in all? That we have the unamiable folly to believe so is the fact; but this is not the place to examine its causes. It is enough to know that they exist, and that after a long course of culture, they generally end in the Englishman landing on the shores of France, loured and black, and charged with prejudice, as a thunder-cloud with electricity.

Every thing he first observes is a kind of moral *paratonnère*, to draw down the flash of his disdain. The lazy-looking people; the dirty inns; the beggarly appearance of the open country, and the wild uncomfortable aspect of the towns, with their formidable barriers and strict police, give but melancholy notions of French vivacity, liberty, or enjoyment. He hurries through these outposts of information, and reaches the capital. There he sees nothing but splendid misery and comfortless mag-

nificence ; palaces and promenades,—the one hemmed round with hovels, the other intrenched in mud. Thus viewing the superficies of things he gallops on ; returns by a different, or perhaps, the same track ; sees in every new place the counterpart of what he left behind ; and, springing at last upon the pier at Dover, raises his hands in thankfulness to find himself again on the world's sole enviable spot of earth*.

Another class, despising this species of traveller, and resolved to do better, set them-

* I cannot refrain from quoting here a sentence of Voltaire, so much in the spirit of true philosophy, that I should have chosen it for my motto, had it not been in a foreign language. “Si les nations de l'Europe, au lieu de se mépriser injustement les unes les autres, voulaient faire une attention moins superficielle aux ouvrages et aux manières de leurs voisins, non pas pour en rire, mais pour en profiter, peut-être de ce commerce mutuel d'observations naîtrait ce goût général qu'on cherche si inutilement.”

ESSAI SUR LES MŒURS, &c.

selves down in France—but where? In some well-recommended town, swarming with their countrymen, where every thing—society, manners, time, and even temperature, are endeavoured to be regulated on the English plan. They meet French people, and they see French character; but the first in masquerade, and the latter in its worst point of view. A vitiated emulation is the impulse of the natives. They want the homely honest simplicity of rustic life, and have not the stores of information which abound in Paris. But they have pretensions to every thing, and are, in comparison to the capital, what a shallow pool is to a great river; reflecting on their surface the mightiest objects, without depth to embrace their extent, or force to bear their weight.

It is not in towns, then, we must expect to find true national traits, but least of all in French towns. Still one field is open to the

true observer—a country residence; where, separate from English pride and French presumption, he may display and look upon their contrasts. Here let a family fix; for if good fellowship, good-nature, true politeness, and heartfelt humanity exist on earth, I do believe them to be found in the quiet circle of such intercourse. That faults are even here is but too true; but what would we have? Perfection? Alas! alas!

But I want to write tales, not dissertations; instead of speculations, to give facts; in place of essays, anecdotes. I would rather shake a prejudice, than build a pyramid; and as a straw can decide the inclination of a balance, so, perhaps, may these volumes fix the bias of some undetermined mind. When I flung aside the staff that bore me on my pilgrimage, and took up the pen that was to note down a portion of its progress, I did so in the hope of contributing my

mite towards an act of national justice. The means I employ are humble; the pretension which puts them forward less than nothing. I look to public indulgence as the best antidote against individual severity;—and, knowing propitiation to be hopeless, must only, in the old spirit of peripatetic pride, throw defiance in the teeth of the academicians.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

SECOND EDITION.

THE unnecessary infliction of a new preface would be a bad return for the public kindness, which has called for a new edition of this work. I scarcely feel warranted in putting such a penalty on the indulgence of my readers; but I am in some measure forced to say a few words here, in consequence of remarks which have fallen from more than one of the critics, who have considered my book deserving of their notice.

It was observed that the work bore evidence of a prepossession towards the reigning family

of France; and objected, that questions relative to the revolution were treated with prejudice connected with that prepossession. The first of these remarks is no doubt justified by the tone of one of the tales, which is quite in unison with what I felt when it was written, three years ago. An obscure and anonymous author can scarcely presume to claim a sympathy with princes. He may, however, without any undue pretension, express a strong interest in the well-being of a nation. *That* I felt, and still feel, for the country where some of my happiest days have been spent, and many of my best attachments formed. Believing that France, just freed from a galling despotism, was most likely to enjoy security and welfare under the constitutional rule of the Bourbons, and convinced that such was the opinion of the great mass of the nation, I was inclined to let my notions on the subject exhibit the prevalent impression. They were strengthened by several

circumstances of an individual rather than a family nature, such as the heroic conduct of the Duchess of Angoulême at Bordeaux, and the subsequent murder of the Duke of Berry.

With regard to the *objection* before noticed I have but to say, that the subjects of most of the tales being interwoven with events of the revolution, I could not avoid touching upon the latter; but I never ventured to argue such topics as abstract questions, being desirous to skim their surface in their reference to particular results, rather than go beyond my depth, by treating them as general principles.

When I wrote, no idea was entertained, by any one, I believe, of the war which has since been undertaken against Spain. Feeling on that point in common with every thousand less by an unit, perhaps, of my countrymen, I have omitted in the present edition the only sentence

(and one quite inadvertently allowed to stand in the former) which could bear a construction favourable to that enterprise. As I was absent from England at the period of printing, I had not an opportunity of making this, and some slighter alterations, in the proper time.

I shall only add, that even this short statement should not have been obtruded on the public, indifferent to my name and opinions, had I not been anxious to clear up to my friends, acquainted with both, what might have appeared a contradiction.

June, 1823.

THE
FATHER'S CURSE.

Who shall tellen a tale after a man,
He mote rehearse as nye as ever he can :
Or else he mote tellen his tale untrue,
Or feine things, or find words new.

CHAUCER.

THE
FATHER'S CURSE.

CHAPTER I.

TRAVELLING, as I always do, without guide or compass, it is no merit of mine if I sometimes light on pleasing scenes, or mix with interesting people. I have traversed France from frontier to frontier ; cut across the highways, and struck into the open country ; passed by where curiosity is generally arrested ; loitered in spots unknown to Fame or Fashion ; always yielding to the impulse of feeling, or the whim of fancy. Chance has so often led me into paths of soft adventure, that I ask no other pilot ; but had I made the most nicely-balanced choice, I could not have better suited my taste than in that district called Le Perigord, and the country bordering upon it.

Sauntering along the course of the river Dor-

dogne, I had left far behind me the mountains of Auvergne; but I occasionally stopped to observe the autumnal sunbeams playing round their distant peaks. I dwelt on the recollection of the wondrous scenes they exhibit, and marvelled that so few of our travellers had explored their secret charms—until I recollected that they were inaccessible to the approach of four-wheeled carriages. They gradually melted from my sight, and new and different beauties turned my thoughts aside.

I had seen the Dordogne in the heart of those rugged hills—born in volcanic sources, nursed on beds of lava, and swathed with basaltic bands,—a riotous little stream, hurrying on its passage with the waywardness of a noisy child. A little further I had fancied it to glide along in the quiet and smiling loveliness of female youth, through groups of gentle acclivities, of wild yet verdant aspect. Now, I paced its widely-separated banks, and marked it swelling into full-grown beauty, rolling its course with conscious dignity along congenial plains; while tufts of stately trees, converted by my imagina-

tion into enamoured lovers, wooed their liquid mistress with bent and graceful branches, which wafted salutation, or sipped her passing sweets. A little more, thought I, and this proud beauty sinks into that sea, where all rivers are finally lost!—and I was just getting into a train of deep analogies, when I was roused by the flapping wings of a covey of partridges behind me. I turned, and saw my dog fixed steadily at a point at some distance. I cocked my gun, but the game had escaped me. Ranger came slowly forward with a surly and reproving look, such as many a musing sportsman has observed, when the faithful follower, who has done so well his duty, would tell you that you have neglected yours.

In all my rambling I am accompanied by my dog; not that I despise the companionship of man—far from it. But where can we find a friend so like ourselves, with thoughts and feelings so moulded into ours, that he will think and talk, stand still, move forward, eat, drink, and sleep in perfect unison with us? This strict coincidence exists not between men; and

without this, such a course as mine is better run alone. Pursuits there are, and pleasures, it is true, which two minds sufficiently congenial may soothingly follow together. Hours, nay days entire, of social fellowship have fallen to my lot; and I look forward with hope to a renewal of such intercourse, when ripened thought shall have mellowed the young fruit of earlier associations. But to wander for months in foreign scenes; to mix with strange society, yet be not a stranger in it; to give the mind up to that reflective abandonment which likes to revel uncontrolled, you must have no companion but your dog. With him you have no ceremony to constrain you; and he, poor thing, is ready for your every mood. If you are gay, he frisks and capers; if sad, he trudges slowly on, and thinks, or seems to think, as deeply as yourself. When you eat, he has always a ready appetite; when out of the reach of food, he murmurs not. Lie down to sleep, he is your guardian; rise up when you will, you will find him freshly at your call. A gun is the natural accompaniment of a connexion like this. It gives both employment

and amusement to man and beast. It is a passport for the woods and mountains; an excuse for idleness; a remedy against painful thought; and removes the mendicant and vagabond air from a poor fellow who journeys with a wallet and a staff. In France one runs but little risk of stoppage or impediment. I do not speak of the environs of cities, of fortified towns, or military posts. These naturally bring with them a train of ills—suspicion, petty tyranny, and insult. But in the happier portions of the kingdom, where rustic occupation takes place of warlike possession; where the fields are paced by the husbandman, not trodden down by the soldier, a traveller may feel himself at home. A straggling gendarme sometimes asks to see his licence, but a foreign face is nearly always a sufficient protection. As I, however, was furnished with both, I walked unmolested—a privileged man. Never yet did surly keeper drive me from a preserve; and often has the honest proprietor of some rural spot invited me, in passing, to kill his game, and share his dinner too.

But to return.—The birds were wild, and flew high in the direction of the rising ground which lay to my left. I marked them into a thick copse, behind which rose a young plantation. Thither I bent my steps, and Ranger soon led me to the prey. I got a couple of shots, and brought down my birds. The remainder of the covey rose wildly round me, and scattering over the plantation, I quite lost their trace.

The day was young and warm. I walked towards a projection which commanded a charming view, and afforded at the same time shelter from the sun. Arrived at this little point, I flung myself under the shade of an acacia, my gun beside me, and Ranger not far off. It was one of the sweetest moments of my life. I seemed throned on the very summit of repose. Far beneath me spread the fertile plain of Bergerac, bounded on each side by chains of hills, and divided into nearly equal parts by the broad and placid river. The richly-wooded landscape was sprinkled with cottages, and showed here and there the tall chimneys of a

château, rising among the foliage ; or the smoke from some humbler habitation, hid in a mass of chestnut trees, whose leaves protect the peasant from the heat, and whose fruit is his chief nourishment. Three or four small towns lay in sight ; the one from which I had last started just visible in the distance.

It was vintage time, and numerous groups of grape-gatherers were scattered in the valleys, as happy as they were busy ; for their joyous songs and bursts of merriment rose up from all sides on the pure and gentle breeze. A party of sportsmen ranged through the low grounds by the river, and an occasional shot came sharply on the highly rarefied air. The bark of an ill-trained dog, and the shout of the country people, when a partridge or a hare escaped their pursuers, were borne to my ear with a distinctness as perfect as if each group were close beside me. Many deeply-laden boats were floating down the river, gaily and unobstructed ; the helmsmen unemployed, and the drowsy passengers carelessly leaning over the sides. One solitary barge, managed by a

single boatman, was working its way against the current. Ungarnished by canvas or streamer, it formed a striking contrast to those which passed so rapidly by. The very breeze was hostile, and seemed to sport in the fluttering sails of the others, like those light and worthless parasites who fan the minions of good fortune. They swept in quick succession round a point that hid them from my view. Others came on, and were alike soon lost to me; but the single boat, working against both wind and tide, appeared, though ever moving, ever to stand still. I felt, that if I chose to indulge in similes, I had a parallel at hand: but I felt this without asperity or discontent, and seemed at the moment to rise above ill fate.

So still was the air, yet so clear, that the tolling of the several bells, as they chimed for prayer, or marked I know not how many hours, fell on my ear with sounds all equal. The hum of every individual insect seemed separate in the general buzz around me; and the very splash of the poor boatman's oar, as it fell upon the water, reverberated through the little grove

where I reclined. It is hard to say how long I should have lain thus listless and delighted, had I not been more forcibly excited by the tone of a clarionette, touched by no mean performer, in one of the most distant outbound boats. The strain came wild and faintly up the river, and thrilled through my breast. It was scarcely like real music, and resembled rather those floating harmonies which sometimes lead the dreamer through mazes of enchantment. I seemed to wake from some such oft-enjoyed illusion, and springing on my feet, I clasped my hands and raised them towards the skies. I felt as if the world were filled with joy and peace, and could not have been persuaded to the contrary by a host of cynical philosophers. Unconscious of my movements, I struck into the grove; but as I trod its little winding path, the train of my contemplations was disturbed. I thought I heard low sobs close by me. Impossible! said I; this must be imagination: my mind wanders, and while revelling in one extreme, its fancies warn me of the other. I stopped and listened, but hoped

to hear no sound. It was however but too true. The tones of lamentation were repeated more distinctly; and, as I rustled through the trees towards the place from whence they came, I saw two female figures, clad in black, glide hastily from the spot where I strove to penetrate.

It seemed a vision of my overheated brain; and, without knowing what I did, I burst through the slight enclosure of myrtle trees and laurel. I found myself in a place that might be well called sacred. It was an arbour planted with flowering shrubs, each one of which might have attracted my attention, had not that been wholly absorbed by its principal and melancholy ornament. In the middle was raised a little grass-covered mound, surmounted by a small and simple marble urn. Two wreaths of freshly-culled and blooming flowers were hung around it. It bore no symbol of sorrow, but this short inscription, in black letters:

TO THE MEMORY OF OUR POOR SISTER.

Every thing looked as if just done. The sods were newly placed; the marble was un-

stained by even a drop of rain; the flowers had all their fragrance; and the whole scene breathed a fresh and holy solemnity. Wound up, as I had been, to the highest stretch of moral imagining, forgetting all that was of sorrow both of others and my own, the shock was extreme. I felt dumb and tearless: I would have given worlds to have spoken or wept; and I cursed the impetuosity which had led to an intrusion, which I thought little short of sacrilege.

The only atonement left me was to fly. I plunged again into the little wood, and, hurrying onwards, soon found an opening. I stepped upon a grass field, and felt lighter at every pace which bore me from the scene. Moving on, with eyes fixed upon the earth, and in a state of intense feeling, I had unconsciously taken the very route I would have left behind. I was proceeding directly towards the house, on the grounds of which I was thus trespassing. On looking up and perceiving this, I would have turned abruptly round, but was accosted by two young men, both in deep mourning, who

had advanced to meet me. They were so near, that there was no retreating. I anticipated reproach, if not insult; and my astonishment was great indeed to meet a polite and even cordial salutation. "Sir, you are welcome," said one of the young men. "Come in, my father has been expecting your arrival." "Gentlemen," I replied, "you have mistaken for an expected visit an unpardonable intrusion. Your father knows me not, and I entreat you to attribute to ignorance the fault of which I have been guilty." "If you are a stranger, sir," returned the young man, "you have the greater claim upon our hospitality. Come in, I pray you. You have arrived at a sorrowful season; but the day of woe has almost passed by, and our friends are now assembling to chase away its remaining hours." There was in the manner of these young men something so pleasing, of mingled sadness and courtesy, and the whole scene presented something so novel, and I thought so interesting, that I accepted their entreaties. They asked me to go in as if they wished I should do so; and that was the

surest method of overcoming my reluctance. As we walked towards the house, they explained to me that they had mistaken me for a stranger, whom their father expected ; and they quite removed my scruples by assuring me, that many would be at their dinner that day, who were but little better known to the family than I was.

I was still, however, not quite myself. The strong excitement of my recent sensations had scarcely had time to subside. I begged of my hospitable conductors to enter before me, and mention that I was a foreigner, who had wandered without plan or method from a neighbouring town ; and, in the ardour of pursuit, had followed my game too far. With that kind and unembarrassed air so peculiar to the unsophisticated Frenchman, they acceded at once to my request, and consented that I should gratify myself by strolling about while they made my apology. I thus gained time to recover my composure, and to examine the place where I was.

The house was small and low. Its white-washed walls, tiled roof, and green window-shutters, would have entitled it to the appellation of a neat cottage residence, had not its gigantic chimneys, disproportioned offices, and slovenly court-yard, presented a bar to the simplicity and comfort which that name denotes. Large, straggling outhouses seemed flung at random around. Implements of husbandry lay scattered on the ill-kept pavement. The annoyances of the farm-yard invaded the very windows of the habitation. Disorder, in short, seemed the governing principle of the place; and, while I gazed on the natural capabilities of its situation, I was grieved that so little had been done for it by man.

The ground lay beautifully sloping to the river at one side, and on the other hung the little plantation. A precipitous bank towards the side I stood on shelved down to a glen of most romantic aspect. A rivulet ran gurgling at the bottom, and wound its way rapidly to join itself to the river. The foliage showed

the softest variation of shades; and the sun, now sloping in the western half of heaven, flung a rich radiance on its mellow tints.

I could have almost relapsed into my former mood, had not the younger of my inviters approached me with a summons to the house. I flung aside at once my mantle of reflection; and, with a resolution to observe first and take time for thinking afterwards, I was ushered into the drawing-room. A number of persons, indeed a large company, was assembled. All were in black habits, except those who, I should have thought, required them most; for I immediately recognized the master and mistress of the mansion by their melancholy looks and the places they occupied among the surrounding visitors, although neither of them wore mourning. My conductors presented me to their father, who approached me, and with a manner polished enough to mark the man of good breeding, but more sincere than courtier-like, he told me that I was welcome. He introduced me to his lady, who looked indeed woe-stricken, and spoke not a word. The

guests, also, had sorrow on their faces, but modified into different shapes and degrees of expression. I looked around me to discover the figures which had glided from me in the plantation, but in vain. After a few general observations I fell behind a group who were conversing in under tones, and silently surveyed the scene into which I had so strangely dropped. The furniture of the apartment particularly attracted my notice: it was all that Parisian ingenuity could execute or good taste select. The window-curtains, of blue silk and embroidered muslin, tastefully festooned together, the richly-wrought carpet, profusion of looking-glass, and splendid chimney-ornaments, assorted ill with the rustic air of the outside, and would have caused me more surprise, if they had not been in perfect keeping with that inconsistency, which is the most striking characteristic of every thing French. But in this chamber all seemed touched by a choice and delicate hand: elegance reigned throughout. No gaudy gilding destroyed the effect of the polished mahogany tables, or the piano-forte, which was placed at

the upper end of the room. The harp was simple and classic in its form. The pictures which hung upon the walls were chaste and exquisite copies from Italian and Spanish masters. The portraits of the family, well executed and neatly framed, had also their places. The likenesses of some I could vouch to be most faithful. Those of the father and mother were particularly striking. They seemed to have been painted in the early days of wedded enjoyment, for the costume might have been that of thirty years before ; and there was a smiling play of expression on the lip of each, which contrasted strongly with their present appearance.

The young men whom I had seen were schoolboys on the canvas, with curly heads and joyous faces, standing at full length, a large dog between them, and altogether a fine and social group. There was, besides, a full-grown youth in hussar uniform, with ardour in his glance and vigour in his manly form. Three lovely female half-length figures completed all of the set of portraits that was to be seen ; but one,

more than all the others, excited my attention, from its being covered with a veil of black gauze. I would have willingly penetrated its concealment, for I was interested in every thing connected with this mysterious spot. I thought I could distinguish beneath its sombre covering the flowing drapery of a female form. I recollected the funeral urn, and my anxiety was almost agitation.

Some of the guests accosted me with the civility usual in this country of politeness. One gentleman, more than any other, pleased me by his address; and the familiar footing which he seemed to enjoy with the family made me suppose him a relative, and, at all events, promised me a better chance of information than the affectionate, yet distant, respect which was visible in the manners of the rest. I attached myself particularly to him; and, in a short time, the announcement of dinner gave me an opportunity for the indulgence which I so much desired. We were ushered into the dining-room, where a table was prepared for upwards of twenty persons. I took care to remove far from

the lady of the house, beside whom the politeness of the family would have placed me. I saw the two young women silently enter and take their seats, while, shrinking from them, I secured a chair beside the gentleman whom I before mentioned.

We soon got into conversation; and, in answer to one of my remarks, thrown out purposely to lead him on, he informed me that the breakfast-table that morning had been as amply supplied, and as fully attended, as that at which we were seated. I ventured to inquire the cause of this double display of hospitality, so unusual in one day. My companion informed me, in a whisper, that this was the custom on occasion of the first visits of condolence after the death of a relative. Some few days following the funeral were, he told me, allowed to elapse, that the sufferers might in solitude give indulgence to their grief. Then it became the duty of the neighbourhood, even that part whose acquaintance was the slightest, to crowd at once, as if the whole fortitude of the mourners was to be forced into exertion on this single

occasion. It was, he said, the usage all through France that mourning visits should be paid in mourning dress; but, in answer to my observation on that of our host and his lady, he added, that parents were not obliged by custom to conform to the colour which marked the sorrow of the other connexions of the deceased. Exceptions were nevertheless seen where parents availed themselves of the privilege to bear the symbol of sorrow for their offspring's death; but *this* case offered no example of departure from the general rule.

"It was a daughter that has been lost?" asked I, my eyes involuntarily fixed on the crape-covered portrait. Before he could reply I saw that my gaze had caught the observation of a part of the family—it might have been that they heard the question. The lips of the young women trembled, and their eyes swam full of tears: the father blushed a deep scarlet, and raised his glass to his head, which bent as if in shame. I could have both wept and blushed—the first for their sorrow, and the last for my own want of delicate reserve.

Determined to restrain myself, I turned the conversation, and joined in that which became general. Every one of the guests seemed anxious to draw the attention of the mourning family from the contemplation of their grief; and the exertions of the latter were forced to the utmost to keep up the appearance of composure. But something seemed to lie upon their hearts still heavier than common woe: a deep sense of suffering, mixed with an uneasy support of it, was to be read on every face of the family. If the father for a moment relaxed in his endeavours to uphold the conversation, he started at times, as if some inward reproach painfully forced him upon words for relief. If the young men now and then lapsed into thought, their fine countenances seemed to glow with the flushings of imagined disgrace. The daughters scarcely ventured to speak, as if afraid of the emotion that rose higher than their words, and was continually struggling for utterance. The mother looked broken-hearted. But, among them all, there was none of the dignity of virtuous sorrow; none of the resignation

with which the woe-stricken mind looks back upon the purity of a lamented object; none of that calm condolence with which we love to dwell, in the days of mourning, on the worth and loveliness of a departed friend; nor that melancholy garrulity which seems to waste away our grief in unavailing words. No, there was none of this—no remembrance upon which the weary heart seemed able to rest. All appeared a hopeless anguish, that wept in the bitterness of despondency.

The guests seemed actuated by a sympathy of agitated and obstructed suffering: their averted looks seemed to say, "We cannot offer consolation—for we dare not tell you that she lives in our esteem." Such was the construction that I put upon their manner; and I felt that the contagion of this compressed and overpowering affliction had seized upon me too. The efforts to keep up the conversation gradually died away. Subject after subject was attempted for its revival, but each one sunk in abortive efforts. The dishes went away almost untasted—the bottles stood unemptied.

The very ceremony of assumed appetite was abandoned ; and the whole party, as if with one accord, rose at length in silence, and prepared to depart.

My neighbour at table had, in the hurried snatches of conversation which we mutually forced ourselves to support, informed me that he was the physician of the family, and an inhabitant of the town where I made my temporary sojourn. He proposed our walking there together. I was glad to embrace his offer ; and, seeing that he wished to take an unobstructed adieu of his friends, I promised to loiter without until he joined me. The visitors began to take their leave. They cordially pressed the hands of each one of the deeply afflicted family. Looks of sorrowful energy were exchanged, but no sounds were uttered. I silently stole from the scene ; for I felt that my presence, though at first perhaps considered a relief, had gradually become a restraint upon the suffering and sympathising circle.

When I got out of the house it was yet day. Dinner had been served about five o'clock, and

nearly two dreary hours had elapsed since then. The sun was gone down, and the crescent moon hung in the heavens, transparent and shadowy, like a spirit of the skies. A rich glow suffused the west. The sun, in withdrawing his beams from the world, appeared to have shed a parting blessing on it, for every thing breathed a luscious and mellow complacency. The busy sounds of the morning were hushed: the call of the scattered coveys, or the chirping of the quails, was the only interruption to the stillness of the hour. My mind, however, was not at first in harmony with this repose of nature: the scene I had just left unfitted me for its enjoyment; and I thought that thunder and storm would have better suited my soul's temper: but in a little while the witchery of nature lulled to rest the gloomy spirits by which I was haunted. In proportion as my breast received the impressions of external loveliness, it seemed to swell with the desire of giving them vent. Heaven knows it was not a moment favourable to composition; and that, I trust, will be borne in mind by the reader of the

following verses, scribbled with my pencil on the spot:

I.

How sweet to range a lonely wood
When the mind is tuned to solitude,
And summer's garish tints are fled,
And the autumn leaves are falling—
Where a rough cascade o'er its rocky bed
With an angry sound is brawling:—

II.

Or on some mountain's heath-clad side,
As the sun yields up his blush of pride,
And roseate beams o'er the landscape roll
At the hour when day is closing;
And the eye and the soul o'er the beauteous whole
Are in mutual calm reposing—

III.

When through the grove a plaintive breeze
Bears a pure perfume from the trees,
And we suck the wild thyme's luscious breath,
And sigh for the flow'rets blighted
Of some blooming wreath, where the hand of death
Spared nought which our hearts delighted.

IV.

'Tis ever thus:—with ruthless grasp
He comes to loosen the firm clasp

Which folds those objects loved the best ;
And then o'er each mourner hovers,
Whose parch'd lips press'd, make the grave's cold breast
Less chill than the form it covers.

I was just in the act of closing my tablets, when my new-formed acquaintance joined me, and we immediately set off arm in arm, Ranger following at a respectful distance. I quickly learned from my companion, that he was not only the physician, but also the confidential friend of the family we were leaving behind ; but he said that he considered it no breach of his double trust to give me some information respecting persons whose situation must have deeply excited my curiosity. On the contrary, he thought it more in their interest that he should make me acquainted with circumstances which were known to all the country, than leave me to hear them from mingled ignorance and exaggeration, or the gossip of a public table.

I requested him to give me the detail of all that was not secret in the sorrow of his friends ; and he immediately proceeded to do so, answering my inquiries with minuteness, and

making me fully acquainted with their sad solicitudes. It was three leagues to the town to which we were bound. We walked slowly in the mellow moonlight; yet we had to loiter in the suburb, to allow my narrator to finish his story. When he had ended, and that nothing more was to be elicited from him, we parted. The moon was high in heaven when I heard the hollow sounds of his footsteps dying away in the distance, as he reached his residence. The beams of morning were crimsoning the east before I flung myself on the bed in my little inn, after a night of sensation more than commonly painful.

Many months have gone by since I listened to that sad recital, and time and absence have worn down much of the first impression it made upon me; but although the vividness of the detail is past, and the scene which I have attempted to describe has lost the freshness of its real existence, still, if I can but throw a faint portion of reality into the outline which I now sit down to draw, I think enough will be done to impart some interest to it.

CHAPTER II.

THE father of this unhappy family was a man of small but independent fortune. He farmed his own estate, which produced, probably, six hundred pounds a year, and on this income lived respectably and well; educating his children, entertaining his neighbours, and giving freely to the poor.

This is an enviable state of living to the man who can consent to be happy in retirement, and sighs not for the distinctions and disappointments of the world. Such a man was Mr. Le Vasseur; but even his choice was subject to its miseries. The Revolution had strongly excited the hopes of this gentleman, for he had none of the abuses of hereditary rank to uphold. He was of a respectable family, but not of distinguished birth; and he saw, like many another ardent spirit, the promise of terrestrial bliss in the overthrow of those distinctions which held a barrier to the advance of lowly worth. He

had gone to Paris immediately after having married an amiable and accomplished woman, and he there expected the realisation of his visions of universal good. A little while dissolved this delusive hope. The excesses of liberty appeared to him to offer no security even to a freeman; and, still a firm republican in heart, he withdrew from the agitated scene.

He retired to his little paternal inheritance; looked on at the distant horrors of the times, and strove to keep the torrent beyond the pale of his own social circle. He had considerable influence in the neighbourhood, from the respectability and steadiness of his conduct. A rigid virtue appeared to guide him in every thing; and if he sometimes erred, it was in judgment, not in heart. In the days of fury, he formed a happy contrast to the monsters who were abroad. He was a warm friend of liberty, but as firm as he was warm. He was one of the many who could see the road between despotism and anarchy; but he was also one of the very few who had the strength and virtue to follow it. He loved freedom, and had

drunk deeply in its delicious fountains, but not to intoxication; and he shrunk back from the debauchery of less-guarded votaries. Such was the public man.

In private life he was consistent. He was an excellent husband and master; and as years grew upon him, he became a wisely-affectionate father. But *Le Vasseur* was unfortunately tinctured with the infidelity of the times. He had followed in his early years the course of sophistry lectured on by some eminent professors, and was a rash disciple of a very unworthy philosophy. He thought man capable of perfection; and in following this phantom, he was forced to sacrifice many of the best, though perhaps the least imposing of human feelings.

He wished to form his character on the model of ancient example; but, like all who aim at forcing feeling from its natural channels, he was the frequent prey of very violent suffering. He would be stoical, but nature had made him tender. In his rigid view of right, he discarded mercy. Rejecting the pleadings

of the heart, he placed his whole reliance upon reason; but as reason ripened, he became sensible of its unsoundness. When he saw this god of men's idolatry raised to what they were pleased to call its place, he saw that it had neither the power nor the privileges of divinity: that instead of men obeying its judgments, they were by no means unanimous in their interpretation of its laws: that while every mouth was an oracle, the attributes of the deity could never be explained:—and while he gazed upon the naked strumpet paraded through the streets, in triumphant personification of the immortal mind, he started back, and asked himself if it was a dream.

This cured him of his first disorder. He fled in disgust, and turned his thoughts towards the formation of a little mental digest, which was to be the essence of all that was wise and good. Plato, Aristotle, and many other speculators, lent their aid to his researches; but one lawgiver was rejected by involuntary impulse. He had been too long taught to discard

Christianity, to be capable, if he wished, of looking there for precept. Through the absurdities with which it has been obscured by mortal frailty, he could not distinguish the still upright splendour of the principle itself; yet he suffered his children to grow up in its profession, because it was the re-established form. But the young people saw in his negative approval of its doctrines all the coldness of restraint; and Le Vasseur, perceiving that his example was robbing them of their best support against impetuous desires, found himself forced to a more rigid censorship; and he was imperceptibly degenerating into the tyrant over his free-born children. They felt this, and, though they feared him, they did not love him; because indulgence proceeding from well-regulated affection is the only foundation on which the regard of children can be built.

The young Le Vasseurs were highly favoured by nature. Each particular temper showed in varying shades much that is bright and beautiful in the human disposition; and

had these materials been kept together by strong principle, perfection would be less a mockery than it is. But such moral cement was wanting. The boys would all have rushed up to the cannon's mouth. Intrepidity ran current in their veins; yet the life-blood was not warmer than their tenderness of heart. They felt life to be possessed for the benefit of their country. They smiled in involuntary good-breeding, and bowed low if a stranger gave them salutation, or if an inferior came across their path; but if a pampered son of pride held up his countenance, and *claimed* respect, they felt a self-knit frown upon their brows, and an involuntary curl upon their lips.

Such was the fair side of the characters of these young men, and such I believe to be the better character of the country. But they had no integrity of soul on which they could rest in misfortune, and from which they might smile at fate. They had no settled principle of right, nor any well-organised notions of wrong. When they went astray, it seemed as if by rule. If

they were correct, it was like chance. Fine feelings and good actions seemed to spring up spontaneously, and in their own despite ; while looseness of life seemed worked into a settled code of conduct.

This wondrous inconsistency in individuals is to be met with every where ; but it is in France alone that it appears as the national character. Other countries are strikingly moral, or the contrary ; and a whole people is distinguished, as well as individuals, by the epithets good or bad : but those who have had any intercourse with the French mind, know how difficult it is to say which character predominates.

The convulsions of the Revolution threw every thing back into its original chaos. Mind was confounded with matter ; and social institutions mingled in a common ruin with the elementary principles on which order had been raised. Conjugal faith became a mockery, and virgin coyness a reproach. Woman was sunk as low as she had been in the worst state of

Grecian society, under the sway of the Sophists; while the flagitious doctrines of that sect came now into practical reaction.

The influence of the government was a powerful engine in sapping the foundations of female chastity. The making marriage merely a civil obligation was striking a death-blow to its solemnity; and the protection afforded to public debauchery made private misconduct a matter of course. The looseness of their literature; the passion for classical illustration; the taste for statuary—in all its dignified indecency—these, and a thousand other combining causes, broke through the barriers of natural modesty; and became the more irresistible, because breathing the intoxicating odours of elegance, and covered by the glittering, yet flimsy veil of sentiment.

I am not endeavouring to palliate the general impurity, but I wish to establish some excuse for particular instances of error: not offering incense at the shrine of guilt, but striving to excite compassion for some of the victims of its worship. If I had not been able to do this, I

should not have taken in hand the story of Le Vasseur. It was not, however, his fault, if the contagion reached his doors. He struggled hard, but it was against the stream; and he had no strength but what was barely enough to keep himself from sinking.

In the whole neighbourhood there were no young women so much admired as were his daughters, nor any who merited more to be so. They were beautiful, accomplished, and pleasing. They danced and sung better than most of their companions; and had other advantages, which the majority could not procure. Their father's wealth, for so his income was considered in their neighbourhood, enabled him to procure for his children masters in music and drawing; and they profited as much as possible by this indulgence. He had himself much taste for the arts. His walls were covered with good pictures and engravings; and the chambers and gardens were furnished with casts from the best statues of antiquity. The subjects of all these ornaments were classical; and Le Vasseur loved to instil into his

children notions of republican virtue through the medium of objects which might at once direct and cultivate their taste. The consequence was in some measure what he wished. They grew up in the warmth of republican principle; but they did not feel inclined to become themselves the parallels of all its effects. The sons almost deified the second Brutus, but they thought of the first with horror. The daughters sympathised with the heroic sternness of the Spartan mother, but they turned from Virginus as from a monster.

The hospitality of the house brought continual visitors, and, amongst others, the officers of the cavalry regiments stationed in the neighbouring town. These officers were the greatest attraction which the neighbourhood afforded for the young of both sexes. They danced and flirted in a style quite different, and rode and shot in a manner very much superior to the rustic youth around. They were, of course, every where well received, and at some houses constant guests. During the late war in Spain, the regiments were continually changed; and

this being one of the principal cavalry stations on the high road from Paris to Bayonne, troops of that description were in frequent movement from all sides of this part of France.

The two elder daughters of Le Vasseur had now grown up to be marriageable, and two other sisters were fast approaching to womanhood. But as they had all hitherto escaped any serious attachment, their father began to hope that they would finally fix their affections on some of the neighbouring youth; who, though less captivating, had many more solid claims to their regard. But in this respect he was too sanguine; for the young people, though free from any dangerous impression, had sufficiently relished the refinement of their military acquaintances to have become extremely fastidious with respect to the others. The casual appearance of the few officers who now had leisure to cultivate the knowledge of the neighbourhood was rather discouraged by their still hospitable but circumspect entertainer, who brought as much as possible his country friends around him. This change was little approved

of by the younger members of the family; and the mother, who lived in the happiness of her children, ventured occasionally to remonstrate with her more prudent husband, but in vain.

The eldest son was now seventeen; and it was determined, in compliance with his own wish, that he should get an appointment in one of the regiments ordered for Spain, and which contained some of his favourite friends. The appointment was procured; and the young hero, after taking an affectionate leave of his family, set off for the frontiers. This was a day of great sadness to those who were left behind. The mother and sisters wept incessantly, and the two younger boys felt wretched at the better fortune of him who, by two or three years' seniority, had flung them so much into insignificance. They sighed for manhood, and the fine uniform of their brother, and built castles together for treasuring up the glory which was to come.

This event made some relaxation necessary to all; for even the father felt his stoical firmness somewhat shaken by the separation from

his child. The young Le Vasseur was almost choked with tears; but, as he pressed his father's hand to his lips, he sobbed out assurances that he should not be an atom the worse soldier for that weakness—and he was not. On the contrary, he was the better soldier for it, because it softened down the courage of the animal into the as brave but more considerate resolution of the man. He distinguished himself in many a bloody encounter by his boldness, and as often by his humanity. In the scenes of horror, which the Spanish war brought every day before his eyes, he only saw fresh reasons for the cultivation of merciful feelings, and left it to others to draw from them arguments for cruelty. But I am anticipating.

CHAPTER III.

AMONG the guests which the renewed conviviality of Le Vasseur's mansion brought together, was a young man named St. Croix, who having, like most others of his countrymen, embraced a military life, had just returned from Spain in consequence of a severe wound, and was then residing with his father, who was a neighbouring proprietor of equal property and nearly similar principles with Le Vasseur himself. This young man was at all times engaging and interesting, but particularly so at this period, from his having so recently quitted a country to which the attention of his friends was so particularly directed. The intimacy of his boyish days, before he had entered upon his worldly career, was now renewed, and to Le Vasseur's family party he became, in fact, an almost necessary appendage. He spent days together at the house. He was fond of shooting, and his mornings were chiefly occupied

with the boys. He understood the general principles of agriculture, and passed an occasional hour with the father in viewing the management of his farm. He loved music, and was a proficient on more than one instrument. That ensured him the favour of the daughters; and he answered, without tiring, the questions relating to Spanish affairs which the mother unsparingly put to him. I need not say that he was a favourite with her. In short, in politics, acquirements, and manners, he was every thing that suited the particular tastes and united ideas of the whole circle. He was, notwithstanding all these external advantages, a libertine at heart. His ambition was unbounded. He longed for fame with the eagerness, and reckoned on it with the ardour, of youth. His self-confidence was unlimited, and he had no doubt of his powers to command good fortune. He wished for wealth as the means of acquiring distinction, and despised his expected patrimony, as well as the retirement in which it was situated. He had been for some time attached to the suite of King

Joseph at Madrid; had before then belonged to the body-guard of the emperor, and in that distinguished situation had been long stationed at Paris. He had imbibed all the vices, while perfecting himself in the refinements, of courts and capitals, and was, even there, a finished and notorious profligate.

In the circle of his native spot there was nothing of sufficient pomp to suit his inclinations; nothing highly-seasoned enough to excite his satiated taste; but still sufficient to satisfy his grosser appetite. In *Le Vasseur's* family he saw a native elegance, of a kind totally different from the artful embellishments of fashionable life, but something that resembled it more than he saw elsewhere; and he gazed on beauty of a description as exquisite as the most vitiated voluptuary could desire. He remarked with astonishment the grace with which these country girls danced; the feeling with which they played and sung; the ease and even eloquence with which they spoke, and their freedom from vulgarisms and provincial accent. This was all certainly astonishing,

inasmuch as it is uncommon ; but who has not, some time or other, met with such unaccountable and striking instances of inherent good taste and self-formed good breeding?

The eldest of the daughters, whose name was Eugenie, attracted particularly St. Croix's regards, and seemed to value them the highest. She had all that brilliancy of beauty and showiness of person which the depravity of fashion prefers to more retiring charms. She was by far the best musician. She was of a gayer turn than Agnes; and the attractions of the youngest two were not yet sufficiently developed to enter into the competition.

The flow of Eugenie's spirits had no bounds ; and her tongue kept pace with the rapidity of her thoughts. She talked incessantly, and generally well ; but she frequently got beyond her depth, and boldly entered into discussions on the most profound subjects with a levity which showed her disrespect as well as incapacity. Agnes thought on these matters pretty nearly as did her sister, but she talked less about them. She never scoffed at religion, and

felt there was a something holy in even its superstitions, and was sometimes almost disposed to regret that she could not enter into its enthusiasm. The mother delighted in Eugenie's talents and their display; but they caused the father many an anxious hour. He would have given worlds to have seen her well married; and he thought that such a man as St. Croix was exactly suited for her husband. With this view he encouraged the intimacy that was going on; and he felt that for Agnes he had no need of uneasiness. There was something in the reflective complacency of even her happiest moments which gave him surety for her. She had a heart fully as susceptible as her sister's, but more regulated; and although her feelings seemed to spring from the same source, they ran in quite a different channel. I cannot pursue the parallel further. The sequel of what I have to relate will illustrate their characters better than description.

For some months matters went on most smoothly with the family; continual parties of pleasure, in the rural scenes around, diversified

their domestic enjoyments. Frequent letters from the army gave assurance of the safety and good conduct of the young soldier. His place at home had been almost completely supplied by St. Croix. The father and mother were delighted by the prospect of having him really for their son, and the younger girls looked on him quite as a brother. The boys, too, considered him completely as such; and as for Eugenie, she gave herself up entirely to love. All that warmth of impassioned feeling which had so long been prisoned in her breast now rushed from its concealment with irresistible force. Every faculty of her mind seemed imbued with the spirit of enamoured inspiration; and she looked, and spoke, and sung more like some visionary being of the fancy than any thing real with which mortal sympathies have connexion.

St. Croix seemed equally ardent and impassioned, but his demeanour wanted that stamp of self-delight with which his lovely mistress seemed imprinted: towards her he was all that affection could create, but with himself he seemed

but ill at rest. His appearance wore a look of mingled agitation and enchantment, and at the times when he was the happiest he seemed the most unhappy. In fact, he was undergoing the severest struggle that the mind of a profligate, yet amorous, man could suffer: he was a constant prey to the contest of ambition with desire. He really loved Eugenie with all the force of the most violent passion, but he still panted after fame with the breathless ardour of devotion. To marry Eugenie would have for ever thrown him back from the object of his primary pursuit; to lose her would have rendered him incapable of its enjoyment. The distinction which he looked to was only to be procured by means of a high alliance—a union with Eugenie would sink him at once into insignificance. He turned in every way his prospects and position: viewed, in all their bearings, the arguments for and against; but was long ere he forced himself to decide on the enjoyment of one ruling passion without the sacrifice of the other.

He was not without a portion of those better

feelings which I am fond of believing to belong more or less to all his countrymen; those genuine sentiments of natural good, which, even when they fall before the power of vice, cast a redeeming lustre on their possessors, and *too often* brighten the sombre shades of guilt. He hesitated long before he resolved on the seduction of Eugenie. I can scarcely, however, use that word: he had but little difficulty on her part to overcome. She was prepared for her fall by a long course of indifference to its criminality; and, if she had any qualms, they were more on the score of expediency than shame.

I do not mean to stain my pages by detailing the progress of this guilty passion, nor do I write to gratify licentious taste; neither have I to dwell, with the warmth of sensibility, on the aberrations of a delicate mind from the path of right. The mind of Eugenie knew nothing of true virtue; and I shall not attempt to excite a spurious compassion for an object undeserving of pity. She flung herself without hesitation into the open arms of her paramour, and in

his ardour had all that she required of consolation. He never talked of marriage, and she cared little on that point. She had no dread of the pangs which she was preparing for her mother, although loving her tenderly; nor of the shame she was bringing on her brothers; nor the danger into which she was thus guiding her sisters. She was quite convinced of her power to remove from all of them every feeling of temporary resentment; and she relied so strongly on the fidelity of St. Croix, that she was even ready to sacrifice them all, should they oppose themselves to a connexion which she felt was to endure for ever. But she sometimes shuddered at the anticipation of her father's severity. From this fear she, however, strove to shelter herself by the hope of being able to conceal her secret; and, if even discovered, she had volumes of reproach to heap upon him in return for the indulgence which led to her crime.

We may believe that in this state of feeling she had hours of much uneasiness. She had so, but they were fleeting. Her sorrow was not

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founded on remorse ; and it is that alone which makes sorrow hopeless. She had no self-reproaches—for to herself she could justify what she had done by the arguments of many of her favourite authors, and the example of some of her friends.

But Le Vasseur could not coincide with those who maintained that females, whose example has once tended to loosen the bonds of society, should be allowed an opportunity of uniting them again, beyond the sphere of their own families, and the limited circle of their particular friends. In consistency with his opposition to the principle, he was obliged to discountenance its followers ; and if he failed in his efforts to instil strict notions of right into the minds of his children, he at least kept from them the practical instances of impurity. No female of suspected virtue was admitted to his house ; and if his daughters occasionally saw some of their tainted companions, it was by stealth.

While this narrowed the round of their social intercourse, it did not better themselves. The

system of outer toleration was too general to be affected by the rigid exclusion from one house, although one of most influence in the country; and the family of Le Vasseur, as well as his neighbours, unanimously pronounced him too strict. I have said little of the character of his wife, because little was to be said on the subject. She was a woman of great amiability, of placid temper, and engaging manners; who on all occasions submitted to others; who thought opposition produced only unhappiness; who indulged the foibles of her offspring, from fear of spoiling their tempers, and who concealed their faults from their father, in the dread of fretting him. Living, however, but for the well-being of her children and the will of her husband, she thought the first should be as dependent on the latter as she was herself; and if she wept, in the sequel, over her daughter's misfortune, it was more because it brought down her husband's anger than from any idea of its innate impropriety, or any notion that her own weakness could be imagined to have caused the calamity.

Such was the easy character of Madame Le Vasseur, and such were the two extremes through which her children had to steer: paternal austerity and motherly indulgence, totally incapable of association; and the one ever counteracting the good, and adding to the evil effects of the other. I feel that I am involuntarily urging arguments of extenuation for the immediate object of my censure. It is possible that I am; but as more morals than one are mixed together in my tale, I must only hope that there are the more chances for its example being effective.

Time, which in all cases flies, alas! too rapidly, is apparently accelerated in speed by every species of enjoyment, but by none so much as by that which is criminal.

When Eugenie looked back on four months from the commencement of her intercourse, she was amazed. It seemed incredible. The time was gone, and like a blank. No record was written of thoughts, feelings, or actions. All had been a wild and uncontrollable flow of spirit, which left no vestige of its course. She

remembered that she had been happy ; and a wild and negligent air was visible in all she said or did.

St. Croix was ever with her, but did not partake of this abandonment. He was almost as impassioned as she was, but he was not so thorough a voluptuary. She thought but of him—he but of himself. Her infatuation must have led to inevitable discovery, had not the lover possessed a more limited share of susceptibility. His whole attention was turned to prevent the betrayal of their secret by the very object to whom discovery would have been most fatal.

Le Vasseur observed Eugenie's demeanour, and saw it with pleasure. He had made virtue too much his study to have had leisure for the contemplation of vice ; and if he had been called upon to draw an inference from his daughter's manners, he would have stated it to be the obviousness of her purity.

He often wondered at the agitated expression of St. Croix's countenance ; but he saw him deeply enamoured of Eugenie, and believed that

no obstacle could interpose a barrier against their union. He knew the sentiments of St. Croix's father to be highly favourable to it, and he felt that he himself was not a man to be trifled with; and that no alternative remained for him who had gone so far.

Madame Le Vasseur was a passive spectator of the progress of things. She saw that her husband was approving, and her daughter happy. The brothers regretted the attachment, which so engrossed St. Croix as to take him entirely away from a participation in their sports; and the younger girls looked on in silence, and thought the lovers very extravagant. But Agnes had a deeper interest in the affair—for she was throughout her sister's confidant. How the mind silently sickens at this fact, and how naturally it turns from the instance of particular ill to the execration of the system in which it had its source! What a mass of public turpitude must have vitiated the natural delicacy of the female breast before such a depository as a sister's bosom could be the chosen hiding-place of such a secret! What

fumes of delusion, impiety, and vice must have risen from the authorized writings of the land before a bosom could be found to accept the trust!

Agnes was, however, her sister's confidant; and the trust could not have been reposed in a safer breast. Her every effort was exerted in devising plans for the prevention of discovery, and for persuading St. Croix into the necessity of his marrying Eugenie. She had the penetration to discover that he had no idea of such a step; and she saw enough of his character to convince her that no common motive would be sufficient to urge him to it. But she perceived through his libertinism a glimmering light of humanity and honour, and a ruling spirit of chivalrous feeling, which she hoped to bring into effective action against self-interest and ambition. She felt that with Eugenie it was premature to enter on a topic of such material texture. She saw in her romantic flightiness no basis on which such argument could rest; and she let her run on in the ungovernableness of her delusion, until the moment when neces-

sity should speak more forcibly than prudence or self-interest.

That moment had now arrived—for the infatuated Eugenie began to perceive that proofs of her intercourse would soon be furnished to the eye of every observer. Her first flash of feeling was that of rapture at the thought of becoming a mother; and her ecstasy burst upon St. Croix in the most impassioned strain of eloquent endearment. In offering him the promise of this pledge, her only fear was that excess of delight would be too much for his self-command. How blank and desolate was her heart when his involuntary exclamation of horror struck upon her ear! He was almost petrified, and lost all control. He poured out the bitterness of his angry regret in a flood of reproaches on his unfortunate associate; and he saw her sink insensible on the floor of the garden arbour, and rushed from it in the violence of his rage without a feeling for mother or for child.

Agnes met him in this mood; and he abruptly told her the secret which her sister had

revealed. She saw in his face the workings of his soul; but she did not for an instant lose her presence of mind, nor evince any appearance of surprise. In fact, she had for some time expected this communication, but was not astonished that the overflow of Eugenie's joy should have first betrayed itself to him who was so strictly joined with her in community of interest.

Agnes, with all her usual composure, and somewhat of her father's sternness, quietly replied to the passionate expression of St. Croix's emotion, "Then no time is to be lost: you must marry her without the least delay!" "Marry her!" exclaimed the criminal. "Madness! Never, never! she dreams not of such ruin." "Ruin! To whom?" "To me; to me eternal ruin. What! dash my hopes of everlasting fame to earth, and prostrate the golden glories of ambition at the feet of her who has led me to this connexion!—Never!" "St. Croix," replied Agnes, "I have no hopes of forcing you to your duty through any medium but your own heart: I shall not even combat the

momentary injustice which would fling upon my unhappy sister reproach or recrimination. If she *had* even been your tempter, you have bound your destiny to hers; and were you even joined in fellowship with a fiend, the bonds would be eternal that were so cemented." She walked from him calmly towards the arbour. He spoke not a word, but remained fixedly gazing on her, with a sort of awful admiration, till he saw her enter the alley which led her to Eugenie; and, as he lost sight of her graceful figure, he felt as if lightened of a spell that chained him to the spot. He hurried away in a state of distracted feeling, but the last words of Agnes seemed still ringing in his ears.

He rushed from the garden by an unfrequented path, and was seen for above an hour pacing the neighbouring vineyard with agitated steps. An hour of deep reflection was nothing uncommon to him; but an hour of hard-contested struggle between ambition and honour was novel to his breast; for in general they acted in concert—at least, according to his notions. In this instance, however, he could

not blind himself to their opposition; for his feelings echoed back their violent and incessant clashing. In defence of the suggestions which bade him abandon Eugenie he had a host of ready arguments; the most leading of which was his never having promised her marriage. Then rushed up the doubt, if he ought not to have done so. Her promptness to meet his advances was at least the result of unbounded confidence; and he could not conceal from himself, that, had she made conditions, she might have had any that she chose. In short, his perturbation was extreme, and he suffered keenly during this hour of mental strife; but at every pause of thought, and often in the midst of thought's most violent paroxysms, the words of Agnes returned with all their air of supernatural and inspired delivery:—"Had you even joined in fellowship with a fiend, the bonds would be eternal that were so cemented." Whether it was the influence of this prophetic ejaculation, or the workings of natural good feeling, even St. Croix himself could never distinguish; but a magical and momentaneous

impulse seemed to strike him with the conviction, that a man involved in such a connexion as his was bound to abide the fate of his associate, though fortune, fame, or life was the inevitable sacrifice. His agitation ended in this fixed belief, and in a determination to act up to its principle: but, while we may suppose him in all the ferment of conflicting feelings, and before his determination was formed, we must turn awhile to her who suffered under the consequences of his intemperate treatment.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Agnes entered the bower, she found the wretched Eugenie stretched senseless on the ground. Shocked as she was, she uttered no scream, nor did she lose in useless lamentation the moments which were so precious for the recovery of the sufferer. She flew to the little brook which flowed through the garden, and the readiness of reflection supplied her with a resource which the want of common conveniences would have rendered unattainable to a mind of less self-command. She steeped her handkerchief in the stream, and ran back with it to the bower. She applied the plentiful moisture to her sister's temples, and had soon the happiness to see her revive. I must not dwell on the distressing portrait which the poor victim presented; nor could I heighten by description the pain of every sensitive heart which imagines the picture of her wretched-

ness. The first expression of her recovered reason was a piercing shriek on perceiving her sister where her inhuman lover had so lately stood. The memory of all that had passed rushed in agony upon her brain; and, with long-redoubled cries, she called upon the father of her child. Agnes endeavoured to pacify her, but in vain. She would not be restrained; and the sounds of her anguished voice soon reached the house, and pierced even the recesses of her father's study.

The first persons of the family who reached the spot were her two brothers, who had been preparing for their morning sports, and, armed with their guns, they rushed towards the bower. Their wild inquiries were quickly answered by the frantic confessions of Eugenie. Her overloaded heart seemed relieved by every burst of agonised reproach, heaped as unsparingly upon herself as on the cause of her suffering. Agnes would have interposed between the rash avowal of Eugenie and the fiery agitation of the youthful listeners. Her most judicious efforts were, however, uselessly exerted; for the exclama-

tions of self-conviction were again and again repeated, and St. Croix as often accused of brutal villany. The brothers, thus wrought upon, gave loose to their mutual fury. With one glance of indignant sympathy flung upon their sister, they rushed through the shrubbery, and were lost to the imploring gaze of Agnes, who, still kneeling on the ground, supported in her arms the victim of violence and exhaustion.

The servants and labourers now came in, and next the mother. To each one was the fatal secret openly developed; but in the contemplation of him who followed them I pass over the effect produced on more common observers. Le Vasseur was the last who reached the harbour. The shrieks which had roused him from his retirement came more faintly repeated as he approached the spot; but the bewailing accents of his daughter forcibly caught his attention. The sounds of grief seldom proceeded from the voice of Eugenie. The penetrating mind of Le Vasseur quickly seized upon the truth. As he listened, the life-blood rushed

upwards from his heart, and a suffocating impression of agony and anger for an instant seemed to threaten life itself. His eyes swam, and had he not laid hold of a projecting tree, he felt that he must have fallen to the earth. It was some moments before he could recover himself sufficiently to move; and during this interval he heard enough, in the continued strain of self-accusation from within, to remove all shade of doubt, and to arouse the entire energies of the agonised father.

He entered the arbour. The paleness of united rage and sorrow overspread his face. He tottered feebly from the violence of his emotion, and large drops, rage-distilled, stood on his sternly-furrowed brow. The servants and labourers made way as he approached. His wife shrunk back, and Agnes sunk her head upon the bosom which she had been so long supporting. Eugenie alone seemed spell-bound by her father's withering gaze. Her eyes wildly glared upon him as he came slowly towards her, with uplifted hands clasped above his head. As he advanced he spoke not, but

fixed his looks upon her. His eyes for a moment closed, his brows were knit more rigidly, his lips compressed together with a sterner energy, his hands trembled on high; and then, as if this short but fearful preparation had given his mind full strength, he spoke: "Listen, daughter of infamy! listen to the curse of him who disowns you for his child. I curse you in the moment of your anguish, and I pray that it may last with your life. I drive you from my heart and my home, and implore the heavens, that eternal misery may light upon your desolate path!"

This was uttered in a voice of terrible energy; and when the listening group ventured again to look up, the father was seen hurrying from the bower, and the object of his malediction was once more senseless on the ground.

Agnes was the first to recover from the shock which the horrid fervour of her father had given to all. Her mother was flooded in her tears, but *she* could not weep. The springs of feeling seemed congealed within her breast, and an icy hardness pressing on her heart.

She felt at the moment that nothing in nature was half so terrible as a FATHER'S CURSE; and shuddered at the reflection that it was mere chance which had spared her, and drew it down upon her sister. But there was no time for the indulgence of thought: she saw that the life of Eugenie was at stake; and in resolute, but, she felt, in right defiance of her father's sentence, she ordered the people to bear her sister to the house. Madame Le Vasseur gave no sign of approval or disapprobation. The servants were always accustomed to regard the words of Agnes as law; and humanity joined at present in stimulating to the disobedience of an unnatural decree. They therefore carried the senseless sufferer along. As they passed towards the house, Le Vasseur was seen standing in a by path, with one hand clenched in involuntary agitation, and the other firmly placed upon his forehead, as if to control the angry spirit that seemed throbbing in his brain. He looked upon the melancholy procession unmoved, and saw it enter the house. The followers were all delighted at this tacit approval

on the part of the father; but Agnes trembled anew as she gazed on the spectacle of his silent apathy.

Eugenie was borne to her own chamber, and placed before an open window. The repeated applications usual on such occasions brought her once more to herself. She had begun to revive, and was weeping bitterly, surrounded by her mother and sisters, when a new object of agitation and terror came to add to the calamities of this momentous day. A shot was heard from the vineyard. It came like the sound of fate to the ready anticipation of Eugenie. Agnes, too, felt an instinctive apprehension at a report so common, and at other times so harmless; but her whole attention was turned to tranquillise her whose destiny, perhaps, hung upon the intelligence of the next moment.

While the sisters thus looked out in the violence of their emotion, a woful spectacle presented itself. The brothers were seen issuing from the vineyard, bearing between them the bleeding body of St. Croix. Eugenie started

from her seat, and in the frenzy of overwrought excitement she rushed from the house, followed by the scarcely less shocked spectators. She quickly met the object of her search; and before prevention could interfere, she flung herself upon her bleeding lover, accusing herself as the cause of his murder, and heaping execrations on the brothers, whose hands she intuitively concluded to have dealt the fatal blow. St. Croix was not, however, dead, but the life-blood was gushing fast away; and here again the presence of mind of Agnes was most strikingly displayed. She despatched messengers in two or three directions, in search of surgical aid; stanching the dreadful wound which had lacerated the breast of St. Croix, and had him quietly placed in the bed which he had so long occupied in the vigorous repose of health. He had fainted from pain and loss of blood, and was as insensible to the anguish of the one sister as to the wisdom of the other. Eugenie, the miserable Eugenie, could no longer support this terrible excitement. She saw her lover laid upon his bed—his eyes were closed, she

thought, for ever—and, sinking under the overwhelming pressure of her anguish, she was carried again to her chamber in the raging violence of a fever.

The causes which led to the immediate situation of St. Croix are quickly told. We left him pondering on the part which he was to pursue; but I had anticipated his decision of giving to Eugenie the only reparation for his injurious and unjust demeanour, by joining himself to her for ever. He was returning towards the garden, with his heart full of this resolve, and bursting with anxiety to utter it, when he was met and abruptly accosted by the brothers, who had sought him all round the farm. Their young breasts burned with swelling energy, and their brains were almost maddened by the sorrowful picture on which they had just gazed. The elder of the two approached St. Croix, and fiercely accosted him: "Are you a man? I know you to be a villain. Here! take this gun (presenting him that belonging to his brother). Place yourself on your guard—stand firm, for you have but a moment

to live.”—“My dear Adolphe.”—“What! villain, does your *coward* heart fail you?” That was enough. St. Croix was as impetuous as his young antagonist. The magic of one word had turned his blood to flame. He took the fowling-piece, and placed himself in the attitude to fire. Adolphe, at twenty paces from him, did the same. The younger brother was to give the signal; but ere he could pronounce it, St. Croix’s better feelings once more prevailed, and the gun remained in his hands uncocked. The signal to fire was given, and Adolphe obeyed it too well. Almost the whole charge of small shot entered the breast of St. Croix, who was sensible to nothing farther, until roused by the painful operations of the surgeons, endeavouring to extract the shot.

The youthful instruments of his suffering were deeply affected. They felt that shrinking from themselves experienced by every humane man who has the misfortune to shed blood, even in an honest cause. They applied to their father for consolation, but he had none to give them: he had more need of it than they.

The daughter that he loved—the friend so highly valued—both in such imminent danger of death. His paternal tenderness abused—his confidence betrayed—his offended pride—his wounded honour—all that could be imagined of suffering to such a man, was accumulated in one dreadful storm, the suddenness of which was an aggravation of every individual horror. He stood, indeed, in want of consolation; and, most of all, of that consolation which he could not command. It was religion that he needed, to bear him up in this hour of trial. Philosophy and virtue were unavailing; and he exhibited a melancholy instance of strength of mind sinking under the more powerful sway of force of feeling. He had roused all his faculties to action when he pronounced the terrible curse upon his daughter; but such a display of desperation was not the natural man. It was the effort of that artificial character which he had for years been struggling to make his own. It was sufficient for the moment, but no more. While the anathema yet quivered on his lip, he saw a portion of its command in-

fringed, yet he saw this violation without power to control its progress ; and after reaching the farthest stretch of stoical exertion, he sunk down under all the weakness of humanity.

I cannot depict the state of his mind during the days which elapsed before St. Croix and Eugenie were declared out of danger. He passed this time in frequent and violent struggles as to the course he should pursue. His natural feelings told him to forgive his daughter, in compassion for her sufferings, while his assumed disposition urged him to persist in casting her off for ever. The contest ended as might be expected, when nature is the antagonist of art. The victory was on the side of clemency, and the good sense of Le Vasseur told him that he was right.

St. Croix had repeatedly, during his illness, sent assurances to Le Vasseur that his only hope for life was, that he might repair his injury to Eugenie, and make her happy. His own father was the negotiator between them, and the whole neighbourhood joined their solicitations for mercy to those so strongly urged

by the immediate members of the two suffering families. Le Vasseur was glad of so plausible an excuse, and he strove to make a dignified merit of yielding to their prayers what every body saw that his heart was yearning to grant.

His first interview with St. Croix was very interesting, but that with his daughter was affecting in the extreme. During the delirium of her fever, she had repeatedly fancied that she saw her father, and in her frequent ravings had called on his name. She sometimes implored, and sometimes defied him;—heaped on him, at one moment, the most endearing appellations; at another, loaded him with epithets of fearful execration. These heart-rending wanderings sunk deep into the mind of Agnes, and she fervently hoped, again and again, that she might die before such a state as that should be her lot.

At length the crisis of Eugenie's fever passed by, and, whether from the natural force of her constitution, or the more probable cause that she had not been worn down by the over-done severity of medical aid, she seemed to have lost

but little of her former strength, and a few days made a rapid change for the better in her appearance. Still, though she had not the haggard and emaciated look which a fever patient in England carries for weeks after his recovery, she was but the shadow of her former loveliness. She looked pale and exhausted, and her mind seemed to be yet more worn down than her body. She believed her lover to be dead, and the physicians thought it dangerous for awhile to undeceive her. With her recovered reason she caught the recollection of St. Croix, and the melancholy hope of joining him in the grave where she believed him buried. She refused, under different pretences, the nourishment necessary for life itself, and under those circumstances it became absolutely requisite, even at the risk of a relapse, to inform her of the only truth that could induce her to live.

For the performance of this task her father was considered the best qualified; and he consented to see her for the purpose of assuring her of his forgiveness, and of communicating

the intelligence which was to give his pardon the most effectual value. Eugenie ardently expected this first interview ; for, feeling that she could not live, she was miserable at leaving the world without her father's blessing pronounced from his own lips. Her mother and Agnes had repeatedly told her of his forgiveness, but she was not satisfied with this. She prayed that she might be allowed to see him, and was so much agitated by the delays insisted on by the physicians, that they at length considered the emotions to be looked for from the meeting were less to be apprehended than the effects of her protracted anxiety.

The hour being at length fixed for the interesting visit, the father announced his readiness to proceed to her chamber, and the time approached. She received the announcement with composed delight, and seemed calmly prepared for the arduous scene ; but in a little time she betrayed symptoms of uneasy apprehension and occasional wanderings of thought and expression. A feverish flushing stole over her pallid cheeks, and she was seen occasionally to

turn her eyes towards the door with a wildness of gaze that was thought symptomatic of a relapse. At length her state of nervous irritability became so oppressive, that she begged that her father might not see her that day. Her mother was commissioned to be the bearer of this wish; but, ere she had left the chamber a minute, Agnes was despatched by the capricious sufferer to recal the postponement, and request his presence. He accordingly, in no slight emotion, prepared to attend the summons, but had not reached her chamber-door, accompanied by his wife and Agnes, when one of the younger sisters once more forbade his entrance. As they entered the chamber he retired, and had but just again composed himself to his study, when a renewed entreaty from the agitated invalid was borne by the remaining sister, cancelling the last prohibition, and soliciting his immediate presence.

Le Vasseur was almost overpowered by these proofs of the misery of his unhappy child. If one lurking feeling of resentment still lingered in his bosom, it was utterly erased by the force

of her affliction, and in moving once more, in tacit obedience to her call, he almost felt himself unequal to the trying scene. He, however, summoned up all his fortitude, and reached her chamber-door. He here paused, and half hoped that some renewal of Eugenie's apprehensions might come to prevent the exposure of his own. He shook the handle of the door with noise sufficient to announce his approach, but no voice pronounced the wished-for opposition to his entrance. He next coughed aloud, knowing that by that he should be recognized. All was, however, still. He then desired his daughter, who accompanied him, to go softly in, and see if Eugenie did not sleep; and, as she entered, he leant forward, in the hope of catching the heavy breathing which heralds the momentary repose of illness. But his wife appeared, and beckoned him in. He had no alternative; he could not shrink back, and he made a final effort to recover his firmness. His wonted severity of aspect and utterance was now forgotten, and, in this moment of trial, the

man completely triumphed over the philosopher.

Eugenie heard him enter, but she saw him not. She did not venture to look up. A film seemed spread before her eyes. She trembled in every limb. Her heart leaped with violence, and fancy pictured her father with the countenance, and in the attitude, in which she had last gazed on him. The appalling recollection rushed upon her mind, and vibrated in terror through her feeble frame. She buried her head beneath the bed-covering, and exclaimed aloud, that she could not, dared not, look upon him. He in a tremulous and tender voice pronounced her name. "Eugenie, my child!" were the only words that he could utter; but the tone in which he spoke them was like magic to the daughter's feelings—so plaintive, so expressive, so unlike his usual firm enunciation—she felt lightened of a load of fear; and, with an electric impulse of delight, she started up and saw her father. Could it be him? she involuntarily asked herself—sunk on one knee

beside the bed—his brow unbent—his lips quivering—his voice choked with sobs, and his eyes streaming with tears! She uttered a cry of mingled rapture and amazement, and flung herself into the arms which opened wide to fold her to a parent's heart.

* * * * *

CHAPTER V.

Two years from this day saw France relieved from war, and the family of Le Vasseur once more at peace and happy. Eugenie, the married mother of two beautiful children, living in her own home ; her eldest brother returned from Spain, covered with honourable wounds and well earned fame ; the two younger boys grown up to gallant youths ; the younger sisters lovely and accomplished ; and Agnes possessed of the only want of her heart—a lover.

The nuptials of Eugenie and St. Croix, which immediately followed his convalescence, were a festival of general joy to all within the circle of the family acquaintance. There was something so interesting, so romantic, so *sentimental*, in the adventure, that the most powerful sympathy was excited in behalf of the united lovers.

The wedding festivities were gay and grace-

ful. Music ushered in the morning, and dancing closed the day. Crowds of admiring friends attended the young couple to the Mairie* and the church; for the ceremonies of religion added their sanction to the civil contract required by the law. Many a flower was ravished from its stem to strew the path of the bridal party; and the quickly fading bloom of the bouquets seemed an appropriate warning to the chief personage of the procession. She, the thoughtless Eugenie, moved on, blithe and blushing, not from modesty but joy. Her look resembled not the fluctuations of a bridal countenance which I once gazed on. There the mingled emotions of virgin agitation at one moment flushed the cheek with crimson, the next called back the burning tide to swell the maiden's heart, and leave her visage colourless;—bringing to my remembrance the varying beauties which I had seen in the passes of a mountain chain, when some graceful peak, clothed in heaven's whitest snow, blushed for

* The town-house.

an instant in the roseate light of a refracted sunbeam, and then, as the slant ray verged down the hill, relapsed into its hue of mild yet dazzling purity.

But the triumphant glance of Eugenie spoke only a consciousness of her victory over ill-fortune. Snatched from the threshold of the grave, she gained no salutary advantage from her escape, but turned back upon the world with redoubled relish for its most worthless vanities. She thought not of the past, nor looked forward to what was to come; but clung to the present enjoyment, as buoyant as the light-winged hours which were fleeting so fast and sunny over her span of life. St. Croix supported her on his arm, and his pallid brow showed the occasional furrow traced by some fitting recollection. He behaved however well, and wore a firm if not an enraptured demeanour. Every member of the Le Vasseur family attended. The affectionate mother wept floods of joyous tears. The sisters indulged freely in her happiness. The sons showed a frank and

manly satisfaction, and Le Vasseur himself bore up in unison with the general appearance of content.

St. Croix and his wife removed immediately to the house of his father, whose widowed solitude was cheered by such a happy accession to his domestic enjoyments. His comfort was however of short duration; for the perturbation of mind which had so violently acted upon a feeble constitution, during the late trying circumstances, brought him to the grave in less than a year after the marriage of his son. St. Croix became thus master of his property, and having neither brother nor sister, he was very well in the world; and, with the peculiar facility of a French philosopher, he flung off every notion of his former views, renounced his shadowy hopes of fame, and, settling down into the farmer of his own ground, gave himself up to those rural occupations for which his neighbourhood was so well adapted.

Eugenie, in her new capacity of mistress of a family, had an ample field for the display of her natural character. The warmth of her

heart had now free channels into which it could run ; and her wilder feelings being bounded by a settled object, she was in less danger of suffering from their excess. Her old acquaintances flocked round her with undiminished fondness, and no notion of disrespect attached itself to the memory of her misconduct.

Eugenie, however, in the midst of her apparent enjoyments, had one subject of severe regret, sufficient to chill the warmest of her pleasures ; and in the bloom of all her joys there was a canker at her heart. Although not at all sunk in her own esteem, or her husband's, or her mother's, or her friends', she saw clearly that she had for ever lost her father's. She felt bitterly his evidently uncontrollable dislike. He appeared to shun her society even at his own house ; and she naturally felt a disinclination to meet him at hers. In short, there was but little intercourse between them ; but the younger branches of the family often saw each other.

Le Vasseur, having lost in a great measure his fondness for his eldest daughter, seemed to turn with a tenfold affection to Agnes. She

had always been his favourite child, and resembled him more than any of the others in all the better parts of his character. She was drawn still closer to him by his feeling towards her sister, for she pitied him, knowing that he felt himself disgraced as well as afflicted; and though differing widely with him on the main point of Eugenie's guilt, she took care not to shock him by any avowal of her opinion on a subject upon which his was so decided. While lavishing every kindness that he had the means of bestowing to meet each want and wish of Agnes, decorating his house anew according to her taste, and forgetting the austerity of his character in the overflowing of his indulgence, Le Vasseur still neglected no opportunity of recurring with the whole weight of his reasoning to the subject which gave rise to his present conduct. He was evidently dissatisfied with the part he had acted on that occasion. He saw that he had lost the finest opportunity of his life for leaving behind him the character of that unbending and implacable virtue, to establish which his whole life had been devoted.

He felt himself little in comparison to what he had been ; degraded in the eyes of those who had looked upon him as a paragon of republican firmness ; and he was conscious that he had descended from the pedestal of his pride to mingle in the common ranks of every-day men.

The mortification which this caused him was much more powerful than any counterbalancing pleasure founded on the applause which he had obtained. He had seen so much evil produced in the world by the plastic characters of those who are thought the best, that he would have rather been an object of fear than of affection ; and, unsatisfied at the late example of his weakness, he almost wished, at times, for an opportunity of redeeming his character by giving a proof of his severity.

But these last were flitting and unsettled thoughts : in his better moments he had none of them. They were the wayward errings of his artificial mind : his natural feelings revolted from them ; and he was even sometimes, in the fulness of his heart, disposed to think that he

had rather relieved his reputation from the stain of harshness than loaded it with the stigma of unsteadiness. "If, however," he used to exclaim, "if another instance should occur!—" But he never could finish the sentence, nor allow his thoughts to dwell on the anticipation.

If Le Vasseur wished to have procured a husband for Eugenie before the unfortunate connexion that ended in her marriage, much more ardently did he now hope to be able to fix on suitable matches for his remaining daughters. But still, with that frightful example before his eyes, he knew not how to accomplish his desire. He had ever been averse to matches of mere interest, or those formed in the usual heartless and business-like manner which is customary in France, where love is, generally speaking, a matter as foreign to marriage as friendship in a mercantile transaction with us; where the fortune of the man is thrown into one scale, and that of his intended bride into the other; when, if she is "found wanting," her family, her connexions, and her interest, are

flung in to make up the balance; but where beauty, accomplishment, or virtue, have scarcely weight enough to turn the beam.

My story is a proof that there are exceptions to this general habit, and Le Vasseur had full to view the danger of encouraging a union founded on mutual attachment. The risks of such a connexion appalled him, and he shuddered when he saw an agreeable young man pay a visit at his house. The violence, or at least the sternness of his political principles, was a great bar to the attainment of his heart's first object. Interests became so divided, and animosities so strong, party spirit ran so high, and party hatred so deep, that the ruin of society was the consequence.

The overthrow of the imperial dynasty, and the re-establishment of the Bourbons, produced a convulsion of opinions which is known to all the world; but few, who have not seen the distant effects proceeding from these grand transactions, can form a just idea of the evils which hang upon the movements of the great. It is not in the crowded capital that such conse-

quences can be estimated. There every circle of society plays round an axis of its own, but does not interrupt the evolutions of the others, forming with it a general system. There things go on as if no change had been. The theatres, the public walks, and the churches, are as crowded as ever, and men gaze on their fellows without frown or sneer, because they cannot from the million single out each particular opinion. A few only are marked by their avowal. One cannot stop another in the street, and ask for the confession of his faith; and the mixture of so many varying shades blends insensibly into a mass of general colouring, while the perpetual contact of opposite feelings rubs off the asperities from their surface. It is that which gives the true polish to city manners in the worst commotions; but in the remote seclusion of the country all is different. There men move in the open daylight of public cognizance. There are no hiding-places wherein they may skulk, nor crowds to give them shelter. Every individual of the thin-scattered population is a mark for the observation of the others; and each one

carries the stamp of his opinions upon him, as plain as if he bore the label of his party round his neck.

In scenes so confined, men are, in quiet times, joined together for their common comfort ; but when the moment comes in which their interests clash, the ties which bound them are snapt asunder with a sharpness proportioned to their former tension. They fly off from each other like opposing metals in a crucible, and every figure stands out upon the scene in all the naked individuality of relief. They then herd together—but there is no grace in their combinations ; and society looks like a piece of patchwork, where different colours every where glare out in independent solitude.

It is thus that every distinct *set* lends its aid to the general deformity, and the great charm of every thing living or inanimate, variety, is lost. Every house becomes a nest for the nourishment of prejudice, while every disjointed member of the common family hangs loose and incapable of performing its functions ; and, instead of aiding in the general harmony of

nature, looks like a breaking out upon its fair and beauteous face.

Le Vasseur was one of those who lent their unintended aid to this demoralizing system. His idol was consistency ; and in straining after it, he too often stretched a good feeling to excess. He was a rigid republican ; and during the short interval of one hundred days, when the return of Buonaparte brought about events which changed the destiny of the world, Le Vasseur thought he saw a bright occasion for the re-establishment of that form of government which had his whole devotion. He boldly promulgated his views, and hoped to make himself a rallying point for all who thought with him. Many did come forward ; and, had sufficient time been given for ripening their designs, the mischief might have spread. But the fate of Europe could not wait for the tardy developement of these Utopian schemes, and Louis was once more fixed upon the throne which, it was discovered, had no chance of security unless it was erected on a constitutional basis.

Le Vasseur again sunk down into domestic quiet; but he excluded from his house all who, by deed or word, gave support to the reigning family. St. Croix was not so rigid: his military life had thrown him amongst men of all opinions and principles; and amongst those too, of no opinions and no principles. He was not a little infected by the general laxity of his associates; and, while he talked of liberality in the formation of his friendships, it was, in fact, licentiousness which he had in his mind. He mixed a good deal with his neighbours of politics different from those which he professed—which were those of his family and connexions; and Agnes and her sisters met at his house many persons who were never admitted to the sanctuary of their home.

Foremost among these visitors, in every thing which Agnes considered amiable and attractive, was the young de Monigny, the son of an emigrant who had returned from England with the king; and who, having lost beyond redemption the entire of his large possessions, had been appointed to an official situation, of slight emolu-

ment, in the town close by St. Croix's residence. The son, who, like most young men of that station, was very poor, and very idle, soon became a favourite with St. Croix, and was often invited to his house. But he had better claims upon the admiration and regard of Agnes. A good person and expressive countenance were his most trivial advantages. The gravity of his deportment assorted well with her own; and the reflective, yet cheerful turn of his conversation, seemed the result of good sense engrafted on good nature, and formed a fine contrast with the flashy and flimsy manners of St. Croix. De Monigny had been brought up in England from his childhood. He spoke the language like a native; had studied the literature, the institutions, and the habits of the people, and had turned his observations to account. With all that noble warmth of national feeling, of which no Frenchman can divest himself, he possessed an open eye to the manifold faults of his countrymen;—but he was also sensible of their many merits, as well as of the errors of the nation he had so recently quitted. His study had long

been to form for himself a character composed of the better qualities of both nations; and being one of the happy few whose feelings are subservient to their reason,—whose hearts submit to the dictates of their heads—he completely succeeded in his design. Thus, at thirty years of age (when Agnes first saw him), he was one of those rare and inestimable models of manners, conduct, and character, which it would be well if the awkward English youth, and the blustering young Frenchman, more frequently studied.

Agnes had just passed her twentieth year, a period when a female in the south of France acquires her full maturity of manners as well as mien. If the women there want the brilliant bloom which girls of that age wear in England, and that exquisite air of innocence which is nowhere to be rivalled, they have other charms peculiar and almost equivalent.—An eye of fire, often tempered by reflection; a lip of ripe luxuriance; ringlets of polished jet, and teeth of pearl: while, under the autumnal tint of their transparent skin, the young blood circles on,

giving a hue of mellow richness to the cheek, less bright but more subdued. Then the ever-beaming expression of their glance—their intelligence—their softened air, that happy medium between languor and indifference—their light and graceful figures!—Agnes united all within herself. No wonder, then, if between her and de Monigny a sympathy of tastes was followed by a mutual passion.

The lover, however, was no boy, nor his mistress a child. They saw their mutual danger. He was pennyless, for the scanty allowance granted him by his father was revocable at will; and he knew that his consent to such a match was out of the question. Agnes, on her part, remembered Eugenie. She felt also the indulgent kindness of her father; she knew that his happiness depended much on her, and she dreaded the impossibility of obtaining his sanction to her attachment. Such were the startling obstacles which lay in the way of Agnes and de Monigny, but they considered them too late—for they loved already; and a passion so forcible and so well founded would have defied

the warnings of a philosophy stronger even than theirs.

Eugenie soon perceived the nature of her sister's feelings, and she half rejoiced in the danger to which she fancied her exposed. Seeing no sort of criminality in the indulgence she had herself practised, she rather took pains to facilitate her sister's following her track, than made efforts to turn her from it; and unconscious of the real cause of her own feelings, which arose from that mingled selfishness and envy, the first consequence of guilt, she wished that Agnes might fall into the snare, confident that she would then, as well as herself, become the object of her father's estrangement, or, perhaps, by striking a new blow at his pride, weaken the strength of his particular resentment. She therefore carefully fanned the rising flame, and her impatience made her often question Agnes as to its progress.

Agnes, however, made no confidant to her attachment. She continued for some months to receive the professions of her lover, and she confessed to him alone the strength of her

affection. They would have wilfully placed a bandage before their eyes, but they could not blind themselves to the utter hopelessness of their passion. They were neither of them, however, of that reckless and indolent turn, which makes lovers sometimes sink under the weight of their despair, and seems to impart a charm to its worst excesses. Agnes calculated a little on her father's unbounded affection. De Mogny knew that he possessed the esteem, as well as regard of his parent; and they agreed, by mutual plan, to endeavour to procure some relaxation of their relative severity. Agnes knew full well the impossibility of shaking Le Vasseur's political dislikes; but she had a faint hope that, by well arranged efforts, she might weaken one (it was all she asked) of his personal prejudices.

On every fair occasion she brought before him the particular merits of her lover, but that in a manner so guarded, as at first not to rouse his suspicions. The frequent recurrence to the same topic, and the animation with which the self-deceived Agnes discussed the character of

one whom she affected to speak of with indifference, could not, however, escape her father's penetration; and in one of those conversations, brought about by Agnes, an unguarded warmth, in one of her eulogiums, told him clearly that her heart was irretrievably engaged. He considered de Monigny (although he had never seen him) as an enemy, in common with all his party. No sooner did the conviction of his daughter's attachment to an object so detested flash across his mind, than he felt himself the most desolate of mankind.

He burst into no paroxysm of rage, nor did one word of reproach fall from his lips. He looked as though the whole weight of destiny had fallen to crush him, and seemed bowed down by the magnitude of his misery.

Agnes saw the emotion which agitated her father, and it cut her to the soul. She addressed him in the most affectionate and soothing accents—assured him that the gratitude and affection which she owed him were nothing impaired—that her heart by being divided by two objects, with claims equally irresistible,

but totally distinct, would acquire strength in its movements, and stability in its devotion. She fixed her streaming eyes full upon his, and entreated him to reply; but he answered not a word. Resentment appeared dead to every possibility of utterance, but his looks were daggers.

Agnes was racked with the most agitated sensations. It was the first time that she had ever caused her father a painful moment, and she felt that her offence was wilful. But, with all the aggravation which this consciousness brought to her distress, the idea of abandoning her lover never entered her mind. She flung herself on her knees, and took her father's hands in hers. She wildly strained them to her heart, but they returned no pressure. She put them to her lips, and the tears which fell on them in showers spoke much more forcibly than words; but all seemed lost on the immovable sorrow of *Le Vasseur*. She implored his pardon—his pity: appealed to every thing generous in his nature; to every liberal sentiment; to every fatherly feeling. A cold atten-

tion to her words was, for a considerable time, all she could obtain. At length, as if life seemed to awaken again within him, he recovered his wonted animation. His eyes fixed themselves upon her, but not with their accustomed tenderness. A glazed fixedness usurped the place of their usual expression, and a sternly sorrowful composure sat upon his brow. He spoke, and the agitated listener hung upon his words with the air of one who waited for the sentence of life or death. He addressed her with solemnity; briefly, but forcibly, pointed out the probable consequences of the attachment she had formed; its evils, and, as he thought, its error. All this was pronounced with a determined coolness that she saw was the forerunner of some terrible decision. It was so in fact, for he swore that he never would consent to the union she desired; and that if she persisted in her determination to complete it, it was at her peril; for on its entire abandonment depended his ever again acknowledging her for his child.

He left her with a calm and measured austerity. Agnes remained for some time buried

in thought; but she gradually recovered her accustomed serenity, and when she met her father at the dinner-table, showed no change in look or demeanour. He, on the contrary, was silent and sorrowful; a dark and desperate struggle seemed to work in his breast, but far too deep to be betrayed by any common expression of pain. Agnes seemed to have recovered the shock, and to have already decided on her future steps. She had got over the fear of her father's determination, while he in his turn now dreaded that resolution which she possessed in common with himself, but in a more forcible degree, from hers being natural, and his assumed. She hoped in vain to continue her self-command, and he fruitlessly endeavoured to assume her tone; but an involuntary restraint was the consequent effect of their separate sensations, and it was as firmly established as if it had been fixed by mutual consent. He did not, therefore, object, a few days afterwards, to a proposal of his wife, that Agnes should go to pass some time at the house of Eugenie. Le Vasseur had great reliance on the

wisdom of Agnes, and he thought that by leaving her to its unrestricted sway, he was doing more toward the attainment of his object, than by offering in restraint incentives to disobedience.

CHAPTER VI.

ON her arrival at St. Croix's she was met by the impatient de Monigny. He too had seen his father, and had as ineffectually endeavoured to subdue his inveterate opposition. The only point the indignant father would concede was a confirmation of the trifling pension which he had hitherto allowed him; and on this inadequate sum the ardent lover resolved at all hazards to attempt his own and his mistress's support. The communication of their mutual failure, and their mutual grief, seemed to bind more closely their united hearts, for nature nor art holds no cement like sympathy of woe.

St. Croix and Eugenie, who were now in the confidence and counsel of the lovers, were present at this interview. They had never seen him so unmanned nor her so overcome. They essayed

their kindest efforts to console them, but finding all fruitless, they left them to themselves.

From this day Agnes visibly pined away. The glow of mind which formerly shone in her face seemed overcast by a hopeless and immoveable affliction. Her eye was dull and her cheek without bloom. No smile of pleasing thought played round her parched and colourless lip. Her hair hung disordered over her brow, and her hands fell listless by her side. Her ear was open to all sounds; but those of joy awoke no echo in her brain, which seemed to reverberate only to tones of grief and lamentation; while the burning thought within consumed her beauty and her happiness.

Her father saw her wasting away, and he himself appeared to decline as fast as she did. The secret of her attachment became known to all the family, and while all participated in the despondency of the father and daughter, they nevertheless made many hopeless and forlorn attempts to remove it. The manly remonstrances of the eldest son, the entreaties of St. Croix and Eugenie, the silent tears of the mother, the smiling

endearment of the younger children, were all tried in vain upon Le Vasseur. He had throned himself upon a rock of resolution from which nothing could remove him ; but with the self-confident blindness, which ever waits on obstinacy, he could see no danger in it. He trusted to his vigorous resistance gaining the victory in the end ; and as his solicitors, in the behalf of Agnes, dropped off one by one from their energetic efforts, he only waited for the hour when she herself should pay the tribute to his determination, by yielding up her lover for her father's sake.

On this principle he did not even oppose her seeing de Monigny, for not doubting the result, he hoped his triumph would be the greater. This feeling did not proceed from any selfish or unworthy vanity ; but he looked forward to the good effects of the example on his other children, and knew that it would be striking in proportion to its strength. Agnes, therefore, was frequently at St. Croix's, and saw de Monigny often and unrestrained. His passion seemed to grow with

every hour, and his urgency for their marriage with every obstacle. Her attachment was tenderly but placidly evident; and her friends, affected by her worn and wasted appearance, urged her, upon the time of her reaching the age which authorized her by law, to join herself to her lover in defiance of an unjust and positive parent. De Monigny was not backward in arguments to persuade her to this step; and Agnes herself *knew* that it must be the final alternative.

But as the day of her legal emancipation from parental authority arrived, she determined to make one effort more to melt the obduracy of Le Vasseur. At the very hour on which she completed her twenty-first year, she broke in unexpectedly on the retirement of his study, and flung herself upon his neck. He understood and *felt* the appeal, and for a moment his arms instinctively closed around her. "Oh, my father! my dear father!" cried Agnes, "drive me not to utter despair. You know not what you are doing by your rigid resolution. Give me your consent to be happy and respectable. You

must, you must!" Her sobbing rendered further speech impossible, but her choked and convulsive efforts to articulate told that she had a world of arguments to urge. She would have gone on, but her father, gently disengaging himself, desired her, in a tone scarcely audible, to leave him. She would not, however, be repulsed. She clung to him as he strove to escape from her embrace. Her tears rolled upon his cheeks, and she even thought his own were mingled with them. But even if they were, they had not power to wash away his firm resolution. He gathered all the firmness of his voice, and repeated his determination to see her die, and to die himself, sooner than give the required consent; and he was at last obliged forcibly to put her from him, and to escape from the struggle which he doubted his power to prolong.

That interview of misery was the last in which she ever saw her father. As soon as she could recover her presence of mind, and sufficient bodily strength, she arose and left the apartment. Without delay, or consultation with any of the family,

she hurried from the house, and in the unfixed wildness of despair she traversed the road which led to the residence of her sister. Arrived there, she communicated the result of her attempt to de Monigny, St. Croix, and Eugenie. Her resolution was now unequivocal; and an immediate application, as prescribed by the laws, was made on her part to her father, demanding his consent to her intended marriage. A prompt refusal was the consequence. Another and another demand, followed by negatives, as steady and inflexible, left nothing which public rule considered as obstacles; and the necessary previous ceremonials being gone through, de Monigny led his affianced bride to the presence of the public officer, before whom the inviolable contract was required to be solemnized. They were attended by St. Croix and Eugenie—no more. How different to the glad procession which usually accompanies a wedded couple! How unlike the expensive and joyous celebration of Eugenie's own nuptials! Instead of the gaudy crowd, showering flowers and blessings on the youthful pair, there was no

one to be seen but some gazing stragglers, attracted to the spot by uninterested and listless curiosity. The friends of both families kept far away, or if a passing few encountered by chance the progress of the bridal party, they hurried from the path with averted eyes, as if there were contagion in its train. A beggar or two gave their common-place and sordid benediction,—and thus escorted, they entered the public office. The Mayor, who was an intimate friend of de Monigny's father, went through the duty which his situation imposed on him with a cold and sullen reserve. The greffier, who registered the contract, had his part in the gloomy combination, and seemed anxious to engraft on his ill-favoured visage a scion from the stem of his superior's disdain; while the ragged clerk, who affixed the seal of office, strove to redouble the reflections of authority in his gruff and greasy countenance, and stamped the arms of the town with an energy so startling, as to tell that an unmuttered imprecation lent its impulse to the act.

Every thing was blank and joyless. The

looks of de Monigny depicted none of the fervid earnestness of expectant love, and Agnes was the living illustration of misery. St. Croix and Eugenie felt the infection, and no congratulatory embrace echoed round the wide and silent chamber. The party walked away; nor did the hallowed solemnities of religion follow the celebration of the civil ceremony, which was all that the law required. They were one, it was enough. They returned to the house of St. Croix, and the morrow ushered in no sounds of merriment, nor shone upon a face of new-born rapture.

Declining the longer participation of St. Croix's residence, the new-married couple removed the following day to a little cottage on his grounds, hastily fitted up for their reception. Cheerless and sad, it contained nothing by which the residence of the newly-married may be almost invariably recognized. If elegance be wanting, or even the necessary comforts of life, there is at least, with scarcely an exception, in the homeliest hut where wedded love first settles, a glow of genial kind; a breathing

of indifference to worldly cares; a heaven of blithe enjoyment which defies both poverty and ill-fate. But if one exception ever did exist to this generally blessed lot, it was now, in the hopeless home of Agnes and her husband.

It was summer; and the unsheltered cot received the angry beams of the sun without any respite or relief: the hard earthen floor, the rough and unpainted walls, the scanty furniture, one ignorant, uncivilized attendant, all threw an air of utter wretchedness around, and "MISERY" seemed written on the walls. Some of the kind-hearted neighbours, by presents, added to the bountiful supplies of St. Croix and Eugenie, would have rendered this hopeless situation more tolerable; but they were all rejected with a pride that seemed to spring from bitterness of soul. Even the friendly visits of the few who still would cling to the unfortunate were declined; and none admitted, with the sole exception of the physician, the old and tried friend of the family. The presence of even Eugenie and St. Croix appeared at first unwelcome, and was in a little time

wholly refused; while the frequent efforts of Madame Le Vasseur and her other children to see the unhappy Agnes were all in vain.

The mystery hanging over this resolute and unmitigated seclusion at length determined the anxious mother to gain an entrance by stratagem; and accordingly one night, when darkness and rain left her approach less than ever suspected, she hastened towards the cottage of de Monigny attended by St. Croix. Eugenie, being in expectation of soon becoming again a mother, could not venture to join the party.

Just four months had now elapsed from the day of Agnes' marriage; and her mother had for some weeks abandoned her oft-repeated solicitations for admission. Her agitation on approaching the bleak and lonely habitation became extreme. She thought of her own home comforts, and the comparative elegancies which surrounded Eugenie. She asked herself which of the sisters was most worthy; and the bitterness of self-answering recollections quite overpowered her. She wept aloud, and was led on unresisting, by the guidance of St. Croix, en-

deavouring to stifle the audible expression of her distress. As they came close to the house, the low murmuring of voices from within made them pause for a moment, and they saw, through the half-opened shutters of the little parlour window, the hapless owners of this mansion of misery. They were seated at a coarse and rustic table: a solitary lamp, placed upon the chimney, threw its melancholy beam upon the wan and hollow countenances of Agnes and de Monigny. The former was busily employed at needle-work, and her husband, with looks of compassionate meaning, seemed striving to give her comfort.

Madame Le Vasseur could gaze no longer. She raised the latch of the door,—for no precautions close the houses of these remote and secluded parts: but if robbers did infest the country, there was little temptation for their attacks in the scanty possessions of de Monigny. The sudden opening of the door made him now start from his chair, and when he recognized the intruders, a flush of anger rose upon his pallid cheek; but he suppressed his emotion and

turned to Agnes, who, in the first movement of surprise, and unguarded affection, advanced to embrace her mother. But Madame Le Vasseur for a moment shrunk back. A thousand conflicting sensations rushed at once across her mind, for as her eye caught the self-betraying form of Agnes, she saw with a glance that she was in the most advanced state of pregnancy. The recollection of her situation came like lightning to the memory of Agnes. She made an effort to fold her robe around her; and as the first astonished pang of Madame Le Vasseur subsided, and as she was hurrying forward to meet the proffered embrace of her daughter, the returning consciousness of the latter made her sink with empty arms into her chair.

The remainder of the interview may be better imagined than described. The astonished St. Croix hastened back to convey the unexpected news to Eugenie; while Madame Le Vasseur spent the remainder of the night in assurances of forgiveness, and many a common-place, though heartfelt condolence, quite lost on the despairing listener.

The dawning of a heavy morning brought no gleam of hope to the afflicted group, but it showed more plainly to the mother the ravages which a little time had made in her once beautiful and blooming child. Her anguish was almost insupportable ; and she saw that she but added to the distress of Agnes, who seemed overpowered and bent down under the conviction that her *father's curse* awaited his discovery of her situation. With this feeling she implored her mother to keep the secret from him, and to give her a chance of dying unbetrayed. She uttered no reproach against him, nor did she shelter her offence with the plea which his obstinate opposition might have given her, even when confessing to her mother, that the day of his resolute unkindness, on discovering her attachment, was that in which the despair of Monigny and herself led to the fatal forgetfulness of his duty, and the fall of her honour. But she now looked upon the past without pain, and mechanically made preparations for the future ; while her whole powers of thought and feeling were concentrated in the

dread of that malediction, which once riveted her to the earth, although launched against another.

Her mother, to quiet her fears, told her that she would be discreet; and, assuring her that her secret should be safe from her father, she left her somewhat more composed. On the return of Madame Le Vasseur to St. Croix's, however, she, in concert with them, agreed to make every thing known to her husband. They unanimously thought, that much was to be expected from his natural tenderness upon his hearing the truth of Agnes's suffering, and from the strong affection towards her, which was best evinced by his wretchedness ever since the fatal hour in which he drove her from his bosom. Full of the most benevolent hopes, they hastened to his house; and without formal or settled plan, the intelligence burst from them, in an united disclosure, which none of them could have made individually, but which they trusted he could not thus withstand the force of.

Le Vasseur heard them in silence. A smile was curling his lip. They thought it incredulity,

but it was despair! His hands trembled, his colour went and came, he sunk back in his chair, burst into a fit of loud hysterical laughter, and would have gone mad, had he not had relief in a passionate flood of tears. They were the first he had shed for many a day. When he came a little to himself he motioned to the door, and there was an awful dignity in his gesture which commanded immediate obedience. They left him; and in less than ten minutes they saw a servant leave the court-yard on horseback, at full speed, with a letter in his hand.

With that wilful deception which the most desperate cases cannot conquer, Madame Le Vasseur, Eugenie, and even St. Croix, felt convinced that the letter contained the pardon of Agnes. They proceeded once more to Le Vasseur's study, in half-satisfied anxiety that their belief would be confirmed. They were admitted. Le Vasseur was sitting in his chair, calm and unimpassioned. They ardently inquired what were the contents of his letter. Suddenly starting up, with a look of phrensy, and a tone of fearful energy, he cried, "my curse!"

Some hours after Madame Le Vasseur had quitted Agnes in the morning, the effects of the sudden and long protracted agitation became apparent in the latter. She felt every symptom of approaching delivery, and her husband hastened off to the town, which was at some distance, where resided the physician, who, being in her confidence throughout, expected the summons. Hardly had de Monigny lost sight of his dwelling, when the servant bearing Le Vasseur's letter arrived. The ignorant girl who had the care of her mistress immediately handed her the letter; and Agnes, recognizing her father's writing, opened it with the eagerness of hope. She forgot for a moment her pains, and lost all sense of suffering in the magic of expectation. Her eye ran quickly over the few lines contained in the billet, when the horror-struck servant saw her sink back in the bed, uttering a piercing scream, the herald of a fit of violent convulsion. Shrieks of maniac wildness, the voice of mingled agony and delirium, burst loudly from her, and ceased but with one fierce and closing spasm, which, at

one and the same moment, gave birth to a fine female child, and broke the heart of the ill-fated mother!

As de Monigny returned towards home, accompanied by the doctor, they heard the terrific accents. As they neared the house, the shriek was hushed; and when they entered, Agnes was quite dead. The distracted servant, who stood by her side, did not think of going out to meet the husband's approach; and as he rushed into the room, breathless and abrupt, such was the spectacle which met his sight.

The following evening Agnes was privately buried in the neighbouring cemetery, her hand, even in the grave, grasping the fatal letter which was the warrant of her death, and which had been in vain attempted to be taken from it. St. Croix and her younger brothers followed her to the grave. The eldest fled from his father's house, overwhelmed by the double shame which had fallen on his family, and the infatuated severity which had perpetuated its disgrace. Eugenie was dreadfully shocked on learning her sister's fate; but the fears were

exaggerated of those who thought the intelligence would have endangered her safety.

The infant was alive and well at the time I heard these particulars, and had not to that day received a morsel of nourishment, except from the hands of its inconsolable father.

LA VILAINE TÊTE.

“ They who, by accident, have some inevitable and indelible mark on their persons, if they want not virtue, generally prove fortunate.”

LORD BACON.

LA VILAINE TÊTE.^A

CHAPTER I.

I TOOK a boat on the Garonne, in the fall of the year, that treacherous season, when the varying tints of the foliage, like the hectic flush of consumption, make us forget the decay of nature, while admiring its loveliness. I sailed down the river as far as Pauilhac, a little port some leagues from its mouth ; a kind of halting-place for vessels bound to Bordeaux, as Gravesend is to London.

The views on this part of the Garonne are fine, but can be scarcely called picturesque. The stream is too wide, its banks not high enough, and the country beyond too flat to entitle the landscape to that epithet so dear to travellers. But there are some interesting points : Lormont, for example, a village on the

right hand, inhabited chiefly by ship-builders, as is evident, from the many skeletons and newly-finished vessels standing on the stocks. A height rises abruptly behind the houses; and, being covered with vineyards to the top, has, till late in the season, a very cheerful and even romantic appearance. Some villages of less note; occasional villas belonging to the gentry of Bordeaux; the round fort in the middle of the river, called, from its shape, *le pâté*; and the towns of Bourg and Blaye, with the citadel of the latter, are the other stationary objects which attract attention. Then you have the ships scudding up or down the river; all sails set, and all hearts joyous, if the wind is fair; tacking and labouring, should it be foul. An occasional steam-boat is seen, plodding along like a Dutch merchant, enveloped in smoke, and turning neither to right nor left; while many little fishing smacks and pilot boats dance gaily on the waves, and plunge their prows through the spray.

I have not, perhaps, done justice to the beauties of the Garonne; but it must be re-

membered that I paint it *below* Bordeaux, as it appears to a man coming down the country, his mind filled with the inspiration of much finer scenes. Sailing *up* the river, after a voyage of some weeks, the impressions it excites are far different. I know this by experience; for I well recollect, that after the tedium of the sea, and the tossing of the Bay of Biscay, in one of its angriest moods, I thought the light-house of Cordouan the model of architecture, the bleak sands at the river's mouth the perfection of rural loveliness, and every spot as we ascended a little isolated Eden.

I need not tell my readers that the confluence of the Garonne and the Dordogne, just above Blaye, forms the Gironde, an extensive estuary, with all the attributes of the sea. A few leagues below this junction of the rivers I stepped out of the boat on the beach of Pauilhac, followed by Ranger, and accompanied by the ennui occasioned by my four hours' lazy voyage.

In visiting Medoc, I meant—the phrase is admissible from a sportsman—to kill two birds with one stone; viz. to see the principal growths

of those wines so palatable to us under the name of claret, and to enjoy two or three days' good shooting, which had been promised to me by a Bordeaux friend. But man is himself no better than the sport of chance and circumstance, and his most settled purposes are often, like scattered covies, disturbed and routed by feelings beyond their control, and which worry them without leave or licence. The morning after my arrival at Pauilhac, the glimpse of one old château was sufficient to drive both my purposes totally out of my head.

Having risen early, and taken to the road, I was proceeding towards the grounds of my friend, when this before-mentioned château lying in my path, I inquired of an old peasant the name of its owner. Stopping for a moment from his work of hedge-cutting, he turned round and answered, "The Marchioness de la Roche-Jacquelin."

"Indeed!" cried I, "is she here, then?" "Here! every body, who knows any thing of the marchioness, knows that she's at Paris," replied he, astonished, it would seem, at my

local ignorance, and in a tone of reproof, which seemed to accuse me of having insinuated an acquaintance to which I had not the slightest pretension.

“Indeed, my friend,” returned I, “I do know a great deal of the marchioness, although I never saw her, and was not aware of her residence.”

Our conversation ended here; and, wishing him a good morning, I walked towards the next village. A full tide of thought was rushing on my brain, and the name which had been just mentioned to me opened every sluice of memory. My whole mind was filled with the remembrance of La Vendée, so chastely and beautifully illustrated in the work of that interesting woman, whose property I now trod on. It was a situation fit to recal the emotions which I had so often experienced in La Vendée itself—that ground once eminent, and always sacred—and I felt my pulse swell, and my bosom throb, as they were wont to do, while standing on the spot immortalized by some glorious action, I paid my homage to heroism in its own

peculiar sanctuary. This is to me of all parts of France the most interesting: it is full of associations of the most inspiring nature; it awakens every thing lying dormant in the mind that bears relationship to valour or to virtue; it breathes an air of sympathy and sorrow into the heart, and arouses at once recollections of heroic devotion, and indignation for the ruin of this its noblest temple.

La Vendée, despoiled and desolated, is no longer what it was. The face of nature is not changed, but the movements which were wont to light up its features are gone by. The thickly-wooded landscape is the same as ever; the verdant mass of foliage, the gushing rivulets, the rising hillocks, the scattered villages, still show themselves. Isolated châteaux raise here and there their red-tiled roofs above the aged oaks; and many a blackened wall shows you where others stood, and *what* destroyed them. Man, too, is there: in fact, the district still exists, in all the visible signs of life; but the fine soul of its inspiration is no more. The mild, yet hardy nature of the people, is not

quite changed ; they are still hospitable, beneficent, and brave ; their cottages and their hearts are open to the stranger ; they share with him their humble fare, and the fulness of their sorrows—but they are a broken-down race. Their courage shines out on a sudden impulse or unexpected excitement ; but the natural tone of former intrepidity has died away in the artificial efforts which tyranny forced from them. The quickening impulse of domestic example has long ceased to animate the peasants of La Vendée. They see no more the lords of their idolatry living among them in the fellowship of honourable association, holding out the arm of power to cherish, not to crush, their followers ; giving notions of right, not by precept, but by action ; teaching religion, not by persecution, but by piety ; endearing peace, by deeds of quiet virtue ; and leading to battle by such spirit-stirring words as these : “ If I advance, follow me ; if I shrink back, kill me ; if I die, revenge me * ! ”

* Henri de la Roche-Jacquelin.

Such was the oft-indulged train of thought that came revived and fresh upon me as I now walked up to the rustic inn, whose designation was a withered branch of fir-tree, stuck in the wall, and a roughly-coloured print below it, representing a couple of jolly fellows sitting, glasses in hand, beside a huge crimson bottle, which shot forth a cloud of blue froth. "Good March beer," in large letters at the foot, was the key to this hieroglyphic, and a signal of invitation to the thirsty passenger. Sure of a welcome in the common home of every wanderer with sixpence in his pocket, I entered the house, and asked if I could have a bed for the night. A little hesitation on the part of the host, a few frivolous questions about my passport from the landlady, and some sly looks of mingled suspicion and coquetry from her chubby and sun-burnt daughter, all ended in the grant of my demand, and in my instalment in a snug little room looking out upon the garden. Being fairly in possession, I bethought myself of a very important and oft-required assistant in the arrangements of all men, but par-

ticularly of those who carry their wardrobe on their shoulders—I mean a washerwoman.

“O yes, sir,” said the landlord’s daughter, “to be sure, there’s a washerwoman in the village.—Shall I run and look for her?”

“If you please, after you have given me my breakfast.”

The washerwoman came in consequence; and, as I offered her a glass of wine from my bottle, she thanked me with an accent which I knew at once to be Vendéan. “What, you too are from La Vendée!” exclaimed I. “Alas! yes, sir,” said she, “many a long day; though I seem to bear the token marked on my tongue as firmly as it is stamped in my heart.”—She here wiped a tear from her eye. The poor woman had a very ill-favoured countenance; and as to the rest of her person, I can only say with Milton, that she had “fit body to fit head;” thus affording another proof that *proportion* may be prejudicial to the cause of beauty.

Her birth-place was, however, enough to ensure her my regard. We entered deeply into

chat ; and, in return to my many questions about the circumstances of the celebrated Madame de la Roche-Jacquelin and her family, she gave me much information. This, though interesting to the sensitive or curious reader, being of private and existing individuals, I do not feel myself warranted, by any example, to make public.

Our conversation insensibly turned on tales of La Vendée ; and half a day was thus spent before the old washerwoman bundled up my little packet of two shirts, two pair of——psha ! no matter—and bade me good evening. My mind was full of the subject ; and forgetting, for that night, both vineyards and partridges, I sketched the following *true story*, which, at my leisure, I put into its present form.

CHAPTER II.

THERE is no truth more obvious than that vicious times afford the best field for the display of virtue ; and never was the axiom more fully exemplified than during the progress of the French Revolution. Many people find it hard to mingle notions of virtue with the memory of that event ; yet gratitude, humanity, and honour were never more frequent—because so many opportunities for their exertion have been rarely ever afforded. Such qualities as these are best understood by contrast ; and, in fact, require the display of their opposites to bring them into action. Bad passions and bad men obtrude themselves upon us : the good must be called forth to be observed. Evil forms the foreground of the social picture, but brings out, rather than conceals, the amiable and mild perspective. The country, and the period in question, formed the mighty frame-work of this moral exhibition ; and it was in La Vendée that

human nature appeared abstractedly the worst. It was there, too, that more instances of virtue occurred than in any other part. There the most hateful passions were let loose: Frenchman warred against Frenchman; the son battled against the father; brother was opposed to brother: yet there it was, amidst rapine, hatred, and revenge, that all the finer feelings of the heart were seen to flourish;

“ Not in the sunshine and the smiles of Heaven,
But wrapp’d in whirlwinds, and begirt with woes.”

In this isolated region resistance to the revolutionary spirit was not caused by feelings of a political nature. They were strictly private, and therefore more pure. It was not that the Vendéans wished to uphold the prerogatives of the crown, or the errors of the court. They were unconnected with the one, and ignorant of the other. The name of king excited in them feelings of endearment only as it was connected with the nobility, under whom they lived and thrived. Had these flung away their privileges and titles, the peasants would have been

as willingly republicans as royalists. Their hardy and unsophisticated minds cared nothing for distinctions. They were happy ; they had every right which they required ; and felt that attachment which free-born gratitude inspires. They took arms to protect their lords from injury, and their altars from pollution. Loyalty and religion were blended with the more domestic feelings ; and the only ill they feared was the removal of that authority which elsewhere meant abuse, but was to them protection. It is this which sanctifies their struggles. Had the memory of their bravery and their misfortunes come to us merely as intrepid assertors of political rights, we should have felt for them all the admiration and regret which is due to unsuccessful courage. But the warriors of La Vendée take hold of our sympathies by tenderer, and even stronger ties. In the soldier we see also the husband and the father. No cold-blooded mercenaries come to claim our compassion, but ardent patriots to command it. We view them in all the energy of home devotion—in all the softness of fire-side endear-

ment—in the strenuous exercise of domestic honour. Not rushing on from the impulse of unmeaning ambition, but rallying round their brave commanders with all the warmth of family regard; and fighting with them side by side upon their native fields, at once the cradle of their blessings and the sepulchre of their woes.

The events of the Vendéan wars abound with incidents of deep, but sorrowful interest. The fortunes and fate of the rebel leaders most naturally attract our attention; but the suffering was so general, there was such a perfect equality of wretchedness, that we cannot gaze upon the devotion of the chief without mingling our regards with that of his followers. Did I choose to work on high-wrought feelings; did I want a hero of romantic endowment or wonderful feats, they are to be had in rich abundance; but such was not my object: I chose a simpler theme and humbler actors, abandoning for truth all views of exaltation.

In the heart of that part of this devoted province, called *Le Bocage*, stood a retired straggling village, containing about twenty houses;

but these were so irregularly scattered, that they occupied a surface which might have sufficed for ten times the number. This village was far away from any high road; and, being skirted by impenetrable woods, and surrounded by rising grounds, it is impossible to imagine a more complete seclusion. The humble community by which it was occupied were ignorant of the world, and did not wish for worldly knowledge. Their pastor, a mild and amiable man, assured them that he had voluntarily renounced it, and that the votaries of fashion held a lot less happy than theirs. The seigneur, who lived in the château close at hand, was another practical example of the curate's veracity; for he also had for many years abandoned the pleasures of high life, and lived among his peasantry, more like a father than a master. These two authorities were all in all with the honest creatures whom they governed, and with a sway so gentle, that this influence was but their due. Nothing was more reciprocally amiable than the intercourse between these poor people, their pastor, and their lord. In each gradation there

was, to be sure, a variety of feeling ; but it harmonized so well together, that it would be hard to point out the distinctions.

The church was a lowly edifice, suiting the humility of the teacher and his flock. The simple altar, and unornamented walls, formed a striking contrast with the gorgeousness of metropolitan embellishment ; and, notwithstanding all that I have heard of “the majesty of religion,” and the “magnificence of worship,” I doubt whether the gilding and polishing of a Roman or Parisian temple ever reflected a congregation more devout than that which filled this modest sanctuary.—But nothing like fanaticism was known among them. They did their duty too well to have leisure for excesses ; guilt rarely sullied the round of their occupations. The worthy curate often wept over the sorrows to which all, alas ! are subject ; but he as often smiled at the innocent eagerness with which his parishioners would labour to convict themselves of crime. Their confessions were frequent ; their penances slight ; and their absolution safely conceded. They were, however, as gay as they

were pious, and as fond of dancing as of prayer. They never neglected their devotions, or forgot their pleasures. The grass plat before the little church was the scene of their Sunday festivities ; and probably neither religion nor recreation was the worse for this affinity. The good priest presided almost as regularly at the one as the other. Reclined in the shade of a group of elms, as old as the ivy-covered walls of the church itself, his smiles gave a sanction to the pleasures on which he gazed. The village contained three or four musicians ; and the rustic concert often charmed to the spot the seigneur and his family, with any occasional guest who happened to be at the château. There was among the inhabitants an equality purely republican ; but they were unruffled by those dreams of vanity and ambition, to which even republicans are subject. They were all alike poor, industrious, well-disposed, and happy.—To trace the portrait of one family would be to give the picture of all.

The cottages, too, were nearly all alike ; but one was pre-eminent above the rest for the pe-

culiar beauty of its situation and its neatness. A French cottage, even now, when the political condition of the peasantry is so much improved, brings no idea of outward comfort to the mind. At the period in question its claims were still less; and in our village external slovenliness and dirt were as much apparent as in any other. But one habitation formed a pleasing exception to this general reproach. It stood apart from the others, on the banks of a rivulet which ran between the village and the wood. It was surrounded by a small garden, kept neat and blooming. The walls were covered with creeping shrubs; and flowering plants were placed around, carefully cherished in winter, and in summer fantastically arranged on benches built against the cottage. The well, sunk, as is usual, in the middle of the garden, and front of the house, showed nothing of naked deformity or uncouth ornament. Its wall, rising about three feet from the ground, was surrounded by a little hedge of myrtle and rose-trees, which, in the season of bloom and beauty, showed a profusion of gay flowers. A couple of vines

were trained along the front of the cottage, and their stems carefully preserved by a wooden covering nailed round them. Every thing within was in unison with the simple neatness without. The room, which served as kitchen and parlour, was furnished scantily, but cleanly. The copper vessels shone bright on the walls, and the table and chairs were white from regular and careful scouring. The sleeping apartment had a comfortable bed; a small closet adjoining the kitchen held another; and a couple of presses were well stocked with coarse but wholesome linen, a luxury enjoyed by the French peasants to what we might think excess.

The owner of this humble yet enviable mansion was an old woman, bent down with age and infirmity. Her whole stay and solace in the world was her granddaughter, whom she had brought up—an orphan from the cradle. This poor girl was every thing that she could desire, except in one respect; and possessed all that her situation required, but one advantage, with which, it must be confessed, there are few who can well entirely dispense. Jean-

nette was amiable, cheerful, tender-hearted ; a good spinner, active in household affairs, and pious ; but beauty formed no part of her possessions ; for she was in appearance ugly—not simply *plain*, but downright ugly. This utter absence of personal advantages had procured her among the neighbours the title of “ *la vilaine tête*.” To let the reader judge whether or not exaggeration had suggested this epithet, the following portrait is given ; and coming from a friendly hand, its truth may be relied on.

Jeannette was—but the pen refuses to proceed ! It is, in truth, but an ungracious task, and cannot be persevered in. How different are the efforts to depict the traits of beauty ! There is, indeed, enjoyment in dwelling on *their* memory : in essaying, however vainly, to commit to paper with pen or pencil the impressions they stamp upon the mind : in striving to trace out those indelible, yet shadowy recollections, which flit before the fancy so fairy-like, so lovely, so evanescent ; inspiring to pursuit, yet baffling every effort at detention. How I have laboured at this hopeless task ! How strove to

do justice by description to that face and form which are ever before my eyes! How, while I thought to fashion out one feature, has the memory of another swam upon my brain, confounding all in an overflow of blending loveliness! Even now, they seem to float before my gaze in the unfading sweetness which needs no contrast to increase it, which time and distance purify, but weaken not. But—but to return to my heroine; that is, to poor Jeannette. There are cases where 'tis best to leave the reader to himself; and this is one. Imagination may complete the portrait I would have commenced, without fearing to err by extravagance: let it paint her ever so unprepossessing in appearance, and it cannot go too far.

Jeannette, unlike most people, cared but little for that which she did not possess; and was rather disposed to dwell upon those compensations which nature had given her. She knew that she was ugly—*very* ugly—but she felt that she was strong and healthy, and her composure was not ruffled. Her grandmother's cottage contained but little looking-glass to

throw reflections on her defect, and the neighbours were too good-natured to supply so unkind an office. I really believe that she thought so seldom of her face, and heard so little to make her remember it, that she only knew of its peculiarities from the faithful but officious brook in which she was accustomed to wash the linen of the cottage, and that of the neighbouring château, confided to her care. This was her chief employment, and, taking pride in doing it well, she was early distinguished as the best *savonneuse* in the village, and her own and her grandmother's caps and kerchiefs were by far the most conspicuous for their whiteness and getting up. This early accomplishment turned afterwards, as we shall see, to good account.

Jeannette, it will be easily believed, dreamt not of love or marriage. She certainly was never tempted to one nor the other. But somehow she never wanted a partner at a dance; her garden, in which she had such pride, was cultivated by the voluntary labours of the village lads; did any thing go wrong in the cottage, she was sure of the gratuitous aid of some

rustic mechanic ; and on her *jour de fête* none of the girls around could show more of those interesting, though homely, tokens which affection presents to worth. Such is the power of virtue, and such the value in which the French peasants hold it, that Jeannette never knew what it was to be slighted or forgotten. It is true she was called *la vilaine tête*, but nicknames in rustic society are by no means tokens of ill-nature. A joke is there given and taken, as it ought to be every where, in good part ; and the bitter sarcasms of good-breeding find no place in the unrefined enjoyments of country life. Jeannette bore her designation with great good humour, and custom quite reconciled her to it. She knew it was very just, and therefore was satisfied that she had no right to complain, truth being, by persons of her rank in life, seldom or never disguised. But she had another appellation, which might have consoled a more sensitive mind—that was, “The good Jeannette.” This was just as involuntary as the other, and not a bit more sophisticated ; for she was, to reverse a common expression, “as

good as she was *ugly*,”—and that is saying a great deal. Whenever a child was ill, or an old woman complaining, or if an accident happened to man or beast, Jeannette was ever one of the first to offer her assistance, and the last to discontinue it. She had also the great advantage of depriving envy of its sting; for, was one of her female companions ever so plain, she had a consolation in looking at Jeannette; and, was she ever so wretched, a comfort in listening to her. Her advice was sought for by her friends in all emergencies; and, what was more wonderful, it was almost as certain to be taken as asked. To make matters short, and tell a plain fact in few words, she had the blessings of the whole village, old and young.

Thus might she have run the quiet tenor of her way, and gone in happy obscurity down the stream of life, had not the public events which agitated her country forced her from her retreat. It may be a question whether or not she merits immortality. Even if she does, these pages do not hope to secure her that reward. Jeannette was exactly eighteen years of age

when the village tranquillity was first disturbed by the sound of the tocsin of war. Alas ! how wofully did that sound break over the stillness of the gentle night, to the ears of those who knew of what it was the signal ! Jeannette was not one of those. She and her young companions had heard much of previous events. Every day was hot with accounts of distant movements and alarms ; but in the gaiety of youth they believed that such disturbance could never come home to them, and they had no notion of the horrors they were so soon to witness. Jeannette was in bed, and on the first sound of the alarm-bell hurried on her clothes, and looked from the lattice to ascertain the quarter of the fire, supposing such to be the cause of the summons. She looked out, but all was darkness. No flame coloured the clouds which rolled heavily above, nor tinged the trees whose foliage overhung the cottage. The air was impervious to her inquiring gaze, and the low-breathing wind was scarcely strong enough to rustle the leaves around. This unusual repose of nature looked like the sleep of death.

Jeannette listened to the bell with a dread which no visible danger could have inspired; and she shuddered without knowing why. At length murmuring voices came upon the air, and a drum was loudly beaten. Shouts of assembling men were soon distinguished, and then the firing of distant musketry. Jeannette trembled in every joint, and stole from the closet where she slept, intending to pass softly through the garden, to demand at the next cottage the meaning of such awful sounds. She entered the kitchen, and was surprised to hear whisperings in her grandmother's apartment, and opening the door she distinguished by the glimmering of the little lamp, half-shaded to conceal the light, the old woman and two of her neighbours on their knees devoutly joined in prayer. The entrance of Jeannette made them start up in alarm; while she, terrified at their solemn and fear-stricken looks, flung herself into her grandmother's arms, and burst into tears.

When their agitation had subsided, Jeannette resolved on going out into the road which

passed before the garden, and connected the irregular and scattered cottages. She learned enough, from her grandmother's melancholy visitors, to know that the alarm without proceeded from the union of the villagers and the neighbouring peasants, brought together by the determination of the seigneur and the curé; who, tired of forbearance, had at length resolved on rousing the parish to the aid of the more forward opponents of the Revolution.

Jeannette resolved to go into the road and view the passing scene. She did so, but a comparative tranquillity had succeeded the recent tumult. Nothing was to be distinguished, but she trod on well-known ground; and, following the murmur of retiring voices, she soon reached the hillock upon which the church was built. The great entrance was open; and, to the astonishment of our heroine, a stream of light issued from it, flinging a wild and solemn glare upon the tall elms planted around. The pitchy darkness of the night made the contrast more striking, and the sighing of the increasing breeze in the viewless branches seemed the

utterance of awful and agitated nature. Scattered groups of peasants passed now and then across the illuminated space just opposite the church door, as they emerged from the gloom of one side, and with hurried pace, were lost in a moment in the darkness of the other. Some entered the church; a few stood still in deep and anxious conversation—but all were armed. Weapons of various kinds were borne by those sinewy arms, which grasped with indiscriminate vigour whatever could be turned to purposes of vengeance. As Jeannette leaned, pale and trembling, against a tree, she was startled by occasional shots from approaching parties of peasants, and gradually a number of fires were lighted on the rising grounds in the vicinity, bursting up in columns of flame and smoke, and casting a dark red gleam upon the woods below. While Jeannette contemplated, with breathless admiration, the impressive scene before her, a splitting shout burst from the holy edifice. She sprang from the earth at the electric sound. It was so unnatural—so demon-like, compared to the low murmurings of prayer

which were wont to breathe through the consecrated building, that she doubted for a moment the reality of what she heard. But another, of still louder and more lengthened tone, brought conviction to the agitated listener, who, hurried by an uncontrollable impulse, hastened to the open door to satisfy her intense and terrified curiosity. She stopped awhile under the porch which projected beyond the entrance. From thence she gazed upon the scene within. A mass of people of both sexes filled the body of the church. They were standing, and as they listened attentively to the discourse of the curé, hundreds of bayonets, pikes, and other martial instruments, glittered above their heads. The altar was lighted up as if for more than a common occasion; and on its steps stood the seigneur, accoutred in all the irregular array of rustic warfare. Beside him was the curé, dressed in the full splendor of priestly decoration. The first was a figure fit for the pencil of Salvator Rosa; hardy, inflexible, and firm. His careless apparel, flung on with the romantic grace of a bandit mountaineer; a leathern belt

around his waist, its large steel buckle shining between the rude carving of two enormous pistols; his left hand grasping the hilt of an ancient and rusty sword; the other supported on the muzzle of a brass barrell'd carbine:—his black eyes shooting fire, and his deep-knit brow garnished by the raven curls which escaped from beneath a crimson handkerchief, tied tightly round his head*. The priest might have been supposed the embodied form of one of Raphael's exquisite imaginings. His whole expression calm, inspired, ineffable; his blue eyes beaming with a light as if from heaven; the graceful drapery of his attire giving ad-

* This head-dress, common to the Vendéan chiefs, was adopted from their heroic comrade, Henri de la Roche-Jacquelin, who was thus first distinguished in the revolutionary battles. He made himself a mark for the bullets of his enemies and the imitation of his friends. "Fire at the red handkerchief!" was repeatedly cried by the republicans who witnessed the uncommon valour of its wearer. His danger being pointed out to him, made Henri persist in what he had first done by chance; and to save him from particular risque, all his brave companions followed his example. See *The Memoires of Madame de la Roche-Jacquelin*.

ditional height to his tall spare form; his sallow cheeks showing, in transparent currency, the blood which mantled through them. The seigneur stood fixed and statue-like, as if motion was stopped by the intensity of some determined thought. The curé had his hands raised in the energy of eloquence, while he harangued his ardent congregation. The distance allowed but a part of his oration to reach the wondering ears of Jeannette. She, however, distinguished enough to inform her that he was exciting his listeners to battle, and promising them victory. In the first instant of surprise she fancied herself the dupe of some illusion; and she sought to doubt the identity of those before her. Were they not some impudent impostors, dressed in masquerade? Could that be the placid seigneur? Could that be the meek and merciful preacher of forgiveness? Such were the natural doubts of the uninformed Jeannette. But it is not strange that persecution should arouse the most sensitive feelings of the soul, nor that forbearance should be turned to vengeance by the hatred of oppression. So it was now with these

altered associates, who seemed to revive the days of old, when the high priest Joad preached revolt against the tyranny of Athalia; or the more recent times, when Peter the hermit poured forth his irresistible eloquence to the warriors of the cross.

Jeannette listened with a fixed and half-unwilling conviction to the discourse of the venerable ecclesiastic. His words appeared to flow from the impulse of inspiration, and at every pause reiterated shouts burst from the highly excited throng. The skilful orator saw that his point was gained. The energy of deep devotion was blended with valorous ardour; and, while enthusiasm seemed at its height, he took from off the altar a flag of white silk. With his face again turned to his audience, he waved the snowy banner, in impassioned grace, above his head. As it floated round him, his long grey locks were agitated by the air—his countenance beamed bright—his whole frame was moved with fervid agitation, and he looked the semblance of something more than mortal. The people gazed on him awhile in reverential

silence, waiting for the sounds of his sonorous and impressive accents. "Behold, my children," he at length said, "the banner of your God, your country, and your king!" The crowd caught anew the lightning impulse from his look, and a loud and long continued cry of "God, our country, and our king!" re-echoed through the church. "Let us now consecrate this sacred symbol of virtue and of valour!" He performed the ceremony with pious fervour. When it was finished he spoke once more. "Who now volunteers to guard the holy banner?" Scarcely had he pronounced the question, when a crowd of young men sprang over the railing of the altar, and with brandished swords hurried, in friendly contest, to seize upon the flag. The seigneur assisted the curé in repressing their zeal, and the former exclaimed aloud, "No, my friends—be this honour mine! It is the only distinction I claim from you. For the rest, we will march together to the combat. We will fight side by side—conquer together, or, if it must be so, die. Look ever to this symbol of our cause: while

it floats above me, the path of glory is not distant: when it falls to earth—then dig your standard-bearer's grave!" The young aspirants yielded to the claim of their chief; spontaneous acclamations again arose; the people flung themselves into each others' arms; while the clashing of swords, and rolling of drums, formed a wild and singular accompaniment to the enthusiasm and harmony of the scene.

The curé waved his hand. All was still. "Raise now your voices to the throne of grace—let your artless anthem bear on high the prayer of Christians, and the vows of patriots!" At these words the rural choir commenced a strain of rough and vigorous melody, in which the whole assemblage enthusiastically joined. The air was more martial than religious, and an unpremeditating pen had hastily adapted to it some stanzas which appeared appropriate. They were as follow:

I.

Why linger we here, when the tocsin afar
Through our villages rings?—let us on to the war:
Let us on, ere the false one write shame on our crest,
To the battle, VENDEANS—our banner is blest!

II.

Proud bearer, whose task is to guard it from stain,
Wave high the white symbol, and lead to the plain :
There be regicide cheeks that shall vie with its white,
As its tricolor rival sinks down in the fight.

III.

Let them come when they list, in their rebel array,
We have hearts for the onset, and swords for the fray :
For our homes and our altars to vengeance we spring,
And God shall be with us, for country and king.

IV.

Lead on, gallant bearer ! high blessing and vow
Have been breathed on our banner—why linger we now ?
Our weapons are out, and the scabbards flung by,
And we swear, by that standard, to conquer or die.

The effect of this chant, if not its harmony, was greatly increased by being joined in by the whole assembly. The untutored crash of such a strain was stunning, but impressive. When the last sounds ceased to reverberate, the curé again shortly addressed the crowd. His looks were once more changed—his eyes were filled with tears. His voice faltered as he pronounced his parting benediction. His accents were those of tenderness and love, such as a

fond father would utter when separating from a favourite child. He had before raised their minds to the highest pitch of exaltation, he now melted their hearts. He told them to be merciful, as he knew they would be brave; and laboured to convince them that true courage was ever blended with humanity. He then cast over them the purifying water, symbolic of the holy dew of righteousness; and finally bade them farewell, as, headed by the seigneur, they sallied from the church; and the last words uttered by his almost exhausted voice were, "March firmly, my children—the God of battles guides and guards you!"

The crowd rushed past Jeannette without perceiving her, and almost unperceived. Her whole attention was riveted on the interesting being whose fervid eloquence had chained her to the spot. She saw him at last sink down upon a bench, as the last stragglers quitted the church. Two or three attendants remained with him, and with upturned eyes and quivering lips he seemed to murmur the remains of an unfinished prayer. Jeannette turned towards

home, where, she began to recollect, she would be anxiously expected. As she descended the sloping ground, she looked around her. The signal fires had almost all burned out. Here and there an occasional burst of flame told that the latest was expiring, and in some places a mass of glowing embers relieved the sombre shades. As she paused an instant at the foot of the hillock, she turned towards the church. The door was on the point of being closed, and the stream of light shut from her. There was no one near—all seemed desolate. The women of the village had, together with those who followed their husbands and fathers from the country, almost all set out in mournful escort to the departing warriors. A glimmering light from a few of the cottages told that old age or infirmity kept watch within. As Jeannette reached her home, her own little beacon was the only perceivable object, and nothing was to be heard but the distant trampling of the fast-going crowd, and the savage yet thrilling strains of their loud-sung chorus.

But I must pass over the details of this por-

tentious night, nor dwell upon topics of distress, so often and so well described. From this moment no sounds of joy were heard in the once happy village, if we except the shouts of occasional triumph, resembling tiger-yellings more than tones of natural delight. The church bell no more rung out for prayers; its tolling now announced but blood and battle. The sports and labours of the fields were abandoned for their fiercer pursuits. Training, exercising, marching, occupied the young men in their occasional relaxations from combat, and the old inhabitants had no heart for industry. The cheerful Sunday ball no longer called the lasses to its innocent enjoyment. A care-worn expression hung on every face, and haggard looks gave evidence of sleepless nights and agitated hearts. Each day was big with new events: some fresh encounter, some impending danger, some hard-earned victory. Many a gallant youth of the village lay unburied on a distant battle-field; and others, after every action, returned to die—wounded, worn down, and mutilated. The women took various parts in these

afflicting scenes. They were prohibited from following the Vendéan armies, and therefore the great body remained, and performed all the duties of guard-mounting and patrolling, like experienced soldiers. But many, disguised as men, girded on swords and mingled in the ranks, leaving their aged parents or their infants to the care of the feeble or the timorous who staid behind. Our heroine was one of the latter, for she possessed a tender, and even weak, nature; but she was eminently useful in the natural occupations of her sex. The church had been converted into a hospital, and under the directions of the worthy curé, and a surgeon appointed to the charge, it was soon considered as one of the chief dépôts for the victims of war. The principal hospital of La Vendée was at St. Laurent, a town on the river Sevre, at a considerable distance from our village; and there was the chief rendezvous of the *Sœurs de Charité*, that sublime association, whose virtues half compensate for the folly or the vice of other orders, wearing the semblance of religion. Thus deprived of the services of

the sisterhood, the women of the village were obliged to supply those offices, to the performance of which the former were wholly consecrated. The hearts of the female peasants readily prompted them to the arduous undertaking; and that knowledge of the simple medicines of nature, and, above all, that benevolence of disposition so general among this class in France, fitted them well for the fulfilment of such duties.

The secluded situation of the village spared it for some time from the actual presence of either army. It lay far from the high-road, and was only resorted to for forage or recruits. But soon the wide-spreading force of the Republican arms drove the gallant warriors of La Vendée to the most remote and difficult positions. The village became the head-quarters of one of the retreating bodies of royalists, and presented a scene quite novel to its remaining inhabitants. Cannons, baggage-waggon, and cavalry, continually moving through the road; drums and trumpets ever sounding; constant parades; warlike accoutrements filling every cor-

ner and crevice of the cottages; soldiers, if we may so call the untrained bands of Vendéans, leaning across the doors and windows, sleeping on the benches before them, or lounging in strange groups at corners. Slaughtering of cattle to supply the messes; the gardens trampled on, and laid waste by marauders—in short, all the bustle and misfortune of an ill-regulated military possession. The seigneur was one of those who, having escaped death in several desperate encounters, had reached again his own roof, to enjoy awhile the scanty repose which anxiety allowed him. The general commanding, with his staff, was of course lodged in the château, and the reputation of Jeannette procured her the appointment of washerwoman to the whole establishment. This gave her ample employment night and day, but being well recompensed for her trouble, she did not grudge it; and for some weeks she prudently hoarded up all the money she received, to be at hand in case of an emergency.

The parties which, from time to time, went out on scattered expeditions, brought back (but not often) occasional prisoners to the village.

At the general assemblage of the Vendéan armies, held some time before at Chollet, it was determined that no quarter should be given; and the shocking nature of the subsequent conflicts rarely allowed the infringement of the order. The few prisoners spared were solely for the purpose of obtaining information, and these wretches were generally reserved for a miserable fate. In relation to them every gentle feeling seemed commonly stifled, and a principle of terrible retaliation governed their exasperated foes. Dragged along, bleeding and exhausted, they used to enter the village more dead than alive; and, after their examination before the chiefs, they were cast into some deserted cottage, or loathsome outhouse, converted into a prison, often to expire of disease and neglect. But many a heart bled silently for their sorrows; compassion even here triumphed over the excitement of the darker passions; and some of these unfortunates were spared to repay their preservers' bounty, and rescue human nature from unlimited reproach.

One night, as Jeannette was busily employed

in preparing some linen, to be delivered at the château the following day, a gentle knocking at the outer door aroused her from her work. She raised the latch unhesitatingly, knowing that the village was occupied by friends; but the object which presented itself made her start back affrighted. It was a soldier in the Republican uniform. He wore the national cockade, but no more dangerous symbol of his profession or opinions. He was unarmed. His face was pale, and an open wound upon his forehead, with the clotted blood which had trickled from it, increased the ghastliness of his hue. One arm was bound with a coarse handkerchief, and supported by his cravat, converted into a sling. He had neither shoes nor stockings. His garments were torn in several places, and covered with dust and mire. He was altogether a miserable figure. He addressed Jeannette in a hurried, yet insinuating tone, and entreated her to admit him, and shut the door. She did so, for there was a something in his look and manner that disarmed her of her fears. The stranger was young, and, notwithstanding his

wretched plight, the indelible traits of beauty were stamped upon his countenance. There was, too, a touching softness in his voice; and his forlorn and perilous condition awoke at once that pity, so hard to be distinguished from a feeling still more tender. Jeannette was a steady royalist, and till now had instinctively shuddered with dread at the bare thought of a republican; but a sudden chill seemed to creep across those loyal antipathies which were wont to flow so warmly; and, I fear, I am reduced to the dilemma of confessing the plain truth with regard to our poor heroine. Yes, the long-stagnant sensibilities of her nature were at once let loose—the thousand kind emotions of her heart, so often lavished in indeterminate yet amiable profusion, were in a moment fixed, brought home, concentrated—and she experienced all that instant rush of inspiration which is defined, most fitly, by the pithy phrase of “Love at first sight.”

La Coste, for so the stranger named himself, shortly informed Jeannette that he was one of the enemy that day brought a prisoner to the

village from a neighbouring skirmish; that he had been, in the afternoon, examined by the royalist officers, and afterwards thrust into a wretched hovel, with all the misery, but none of the security, of confinement. He had just availed himself of the carelessness of his guards to effect his escape, when, in search of some hiding-place, he was attracted by the light in the cottage window. He knew, he said, that he ran a fearful risk; but seeing through the lattice that there was only a woman, and that a young one (he could not force himself to say a pretty, or even an interesting one—words so common), he relied on her compassion overpowering every feeling of harshness or hostility. He intreated her to protect and shelter him—and she did so. There was no time for hesitation, had she even been disposed to hesitate; but of this it will be believed she never thought, for most of my readers will possibly be able to testify, that when people surrender the heart, they are seldom difficult as to yielding up the house. She led him softly to her little closet, and insisted on his occupying her

bed. Should any one be disposed to shrink from this arrangement, I must beg them simply to consider that Jeannette was a peasant girl, not versed in nice distinctions—innocent and ugly—and also that this was a case of life and death. She warmed some water, and washed his wounded forehead and his lacerated feet. Her hospital experience was now of infinite value, and she exercised it with a tender alacrity, which she was astonished to acknowledge greater than usual. She next bound up his contused arm, and gave him, from the little store of the cottage, something to eat, with a bottle of wine, all of which he readily disposed of. Jeannette had seen enough of wounds to know that his were but slight; and though not quite conversant in theories of animal appetite, she felt there was not much danger to be apprehended from the specimen which his exhibited. Neither was she alarmed to observe some symptoms of drowsiness display themselves in her patient's visage. She begged of him to give free indulgence to his evident inclination to repose. Prompted for a time by

his expiring *politesse*, he made some faint objections; but yielding at length to her solicitations, and his own desires, he nodded an involuntary assent, and closed his eyes on such flagrant breach of gallantry. Jeannette had thus the satisfaction of seeing him sink into a profound sleep, and she then took possession of an arm-chair by the kitchen fire, where she sat the whole night ruminating on the oddness of her adventure, and forming plans for escaping from its dangers.

Her cogitations were serious and embarrassing, but mixed with them was a certain buoyancy of feeling wholly unaccountable to its possessor. She felt that in harbouring an enemy to the cause, she was doing it an injury—that in concealing a man, particularly as he was concealed, she was committing, at least, an indiscretion. She knew that in case of discovery she should certainly incur high censure; perhaps disgrace and punishment. But she seemed to rise superior to party feeling, to prudery, and even to prudence; and an inward whispering seemed still to tell her that her fears

were visionary, and her risk chimerical. She wondered what it could be, yet scarcely liked to ask herself what it was. She felt an awkwardness she knew not why, and yet it was so pleasing she was unwilling to wish herself quite at ease. She turned the matter over in every way; viewed her situation in all its aspects, and found it always to preserve the same face, like portraits, which, observed from whatever position we will, seem ever to fix their eyes full upon ours. It was thus that on every account she felt bound to save the young man. She resolved to do so at all hazards, and, as soon as the first glimmer of morning light broke through the lattice, she approached the closet to tell him so. He still slept. Jeannette wished him awake, and strove to persuade herself that it was merely for his safety she wished it; but she longed notwithstanding for the soft expression of his gratitude, which she knew would follow her communication, for his gentle accents were still tingling in her ears. She could not, however, summon up the courage to disturb him, and she retreated softly to the

kitchen again. The lark was by this time winging his heavenward flight, and the chirpings of the less aspiring songsters called Jeannette to the window. As she opened it, the breeze rushed in upon her fresh and familiar; and she thought that, in spite of her peril, she never felt so light and happy. She looked out revived and joyous, but her heart's blood seemed suddenly congealed when she saw approaching from one of the opposite cottages three or four armed men, whom she rightly conjectured to be a part of the evening guard in search of their fugitive foe. She hurried into his hiding-place, and not having the power of utterance, she shook him into sensibility, and a sense of his danger. Time was precious; security was the first consideration; and in order to it he was obliged to submit to the unpleasant necessity of being covered with a huge heap of the unwashed linen, which Jeannette threw carelessly over him, leaving but a small opening at the back part of the bed, through which he had just room to breathe. This being arranged, she spread her table in the

kitchen for the apparent completion of her task ; and had just renewed it, when the door was unceremoniously burst open by the dreaded visitors. We must not, however, mistake their motives, nor imagine from their conduct any thing derogatory to the respectability of our cottage friends. Suspicion never ventured to light upon their loyalty, but their well-known humanity caused them to be doubted on this occasion. To the opening interrogations Jeanette could make no reply. She trembled in visible agitation ; and the rude remarks of her inquisitors awakened the old woman in the room within. Her thoughts, which had been latterly in constant movement, and turned unceasingly on the subject of revolutionary alarms, immediately pictured, in the rough figures that now entered her chamber, the living apparitions which her imagination had conjured up. Her consequent scream came like confirmation to the suspicions of the soldiers. They therefore proceeded with increased asperity to announce to the dame the nature of their visit, and to commence without delay its business. When

she rightly understood their meaning, and her own safety, her feelings took a new turn, and rage usurped the throne just vacated by terror. She gave vent to her resentment in a shower of such reproaches as weak people, in their anger, are wont to lavish on those friends from whom they dread no retaliation. The soldiers smiled, and continued their search. They poked their heads into every nook sufficiently capacious, and their bayonets where those could not enter. The very sanctuary of the old lady's repose was violated by this pointed scrutiny; and when satisfied that no living thing lurked beneath the blankets, they proceeded to the closet of Jeannette to repeat the operation. The suffocating heap which covered her bed was just about to be submitted to the like examination, when the old woman fiercely interposed, exclaiming that it was the general's linen, in time to save the heap from perforation, and the whole secret from discovery. Jeannette stood silent and almost senseless, being unblessed by the force of mind which enables us to overcome our feelings, or the power of deception which teaches us to

conceal them. The old woman, taking advantage of the hesitation which her last appeal had produced, assumed a higher tone, and threatened punishment for the affront thus inflicted on one of the functionaries (that was the washerwoman) of the right (that was the royal) cause. The soldiers, brought to their recollection, began to look like agents who have exceeded their powers. They gave one secret, searching glance at the old woman, and another at Jeannette. The demeanour of the first disarmed suspicion, while the looks of the latter defied it. The old woman's countenance beamed indignant innocence, and he must have been indeed a clever physiognomist who could have discovered a secret in our heroine's illegible face. Baffled in their object, the party retired, and before night the pursuit was abandoned for the observance of more material concerns.

The approach of the republican army, in all the flush of victory, was this very day announced at quarters; and the village had been fixed on, in a council of the chiefs, as the spot most favourable to the junction of the royalist di-

visions, for the purpose of risking a general action. Great bustle of course prevailed, and the minds of all being occupied in anticipations of the coming contest, Jeannette was for several days left unmolested to the discharge of her duties towards her interesting invalid. I pass over the detail of the many difficulties she experienced in concealing him from her grandmother's observation. These, however, she surmounted with an address surprising to herself, proportioned to her former ignorance in the science of hypocrisy; and which gave La Coste a notion of her cleverness, exaggerated by the contrast of his first impressions. He had a less arduous, but more wearisome, part to play;—to suffer that state of demi-existence where the body is obliged to lie passive and inert, while every energy of the mind gains new activity, and the brain seems wearing out the frame-work that contains its busy machinery. He lay for most part of the day in bed, nearly smothered by the weight of clothes which his considerate protectress took care to heap upon him. When cramped and exhausted almost

beyond endurance, he used occasionally to creep from his concealment, and screened by some linen, which Jeannette hung before the door and window as if to dry, he snatched the indulgence of a few stooping, distorted turns up and down the closet (which was three good paces in length), and then stole again into his covert. At night his situation was more tolerable. The weather at the time was happily dark and clouded, and he might with safety sit at the open casement breathing the freshness of the midnight air; and he sometimes even stepped boldly out into the little garden, unable to resist his desire to tread the earth once more, and feel himself half free.

Dread of discovery, which would not only bring down certain ruin upon him, but as infallibly compromise the safety of his preserver, obliged him to retrench this only solace of his imprisonment. Returning into his closet, he was always sure to perceive the little table covered with an ample supply for that appetite which convalescence every day increased, and over which confinement exercised its control in

vain. He had no longer any bodily ill, for the application of Jeannette's simple remedies had already removed every obstacle to the recovery of his strength. The consequent consumption of bread, cheese, and eggs was enormous, and perfectly incomprehensible to the old woman, who saw, of a morning, a complete clearance of as much food as used to serve for three or four days provision for herself and Jeannette. The latter had been ever a remarkably poor eater, but she all of a sudden proclaimed a hunger that verged upon voracity; and, what was still more extraordinary to the grandmother, it was at night that this miraculous increase of appetite was principally displayed. To sausages Jeannette, from her earliest moments, had had a decided antipathy. The old woman well remembered that when the poor girl, at six months old, had lost her mother, and with her the natural nourishment of her age, a tender-hearted neighbour who stood by, in the act of eating one of those savoury preparations of country cookery, would have soothed the crying infant by a morsel of the tempting relish; but the

shock inflicted upon the palate of the child was so severe, that she never could overcome the dislike—yet of a dozen of these delicacies, now presented to her grandmother by a neighbour, only two were suffered to proceed on their original destination. Jeannette arrested the progress of the others. She put in her claim to their possession, and seemed resolved, by this sudden affection, to atone for her long indulged hostility. Wine, too, which she had before now rarely tasted, became a matter of absolute necessity. She proclaimed herself in daily want of a portion, more than had formerly served her for a month. The fact was, that she was afraid to take the unusual step of seeking abroad those supplies which her patient required, and preferred exciting the astonishment of her aged relative to arousing the suspicion of her younger friends. She endeavoured to persuade the former that her marvellous appetite was the natural effect of her increased exertions; but this did not satisfy the old woman. Convinced that some miracle was working, she vainly exerted her conjectural faculties

to explain it away ; and finding, at length, that it was too vague for her solution, she had recourse to her saint, whose name I am ignorant of, and whose power or inclination was, in this case, insufficient. Invocation, prayer, and perseverance were fruitlessly essayed for a whole week. The mysterious secret remained unsolved, and the piety of the dame, like that of many another pretending to more sanctity, being weakened by the want of immediate satisfaction, she abandoned her reliance on supernatural power, and was on the point of turning into the channel of mortal sagacity—in fact, she had just resolved to consult the curé on the question, when the rapid march of events removed the necessity, as well as the opportunity, for so doing. In the meantime Jeannette employed herself in unceasing efforts for the advantage and comfort of her protégé. She supplied him with a pair of shoes, the best she had of two pair ; and let not the idolater of female symmetry be agonised to learn, that they fitted him well, but rather loosely ; for the foot of the young grenadier did not measure the

tenth part of an inch more in length, and considerably less than that in breadth, than the mark imprinted by our heroine in the mud, when she paced the winter pathways of the village. She supplied him, too, with stockings from her scanty store (but I am not prepared to treat of the mystery of *their* proportion). She employed herself at night in changing the whole arrangement of his dress. She cut his military coat into the jacket of a simple civilian ; stripped it of its warlike ornaments, and turned the skirts into a cap. For ten nights she never slept but in the great chair before mentioned, and she was beginning to show evident marks of fatigue and anxiety. Her patient observed this, and he felt deeply both her kindness and her suffering. He bounded with ardour to be once more in action ; he considered his concealment a disgrace, and burned with shame at the thought of being discovered by his comrades, on the triumphant entry which he anticipated, hidden under a bundle of foul linen !

The preparations for the battle were now coming to a close. The royalist position was

strengthened by every possible means. Redoubts were constructed on the rising grounds, trees felled in the plains below; the rivulets dammed up, to be let loose as the enemy advanced:—nothing, in short, was left undone to second the bravery of the peasant troops, whose courage was unabated, but whose tactics had gained nothing by experience. Daily skirmishes took place, and random discharges of artillery rolled their echoes round the village.

The troops on either side could with difficulty be restrained. Reinforcements thronged to the royalist lines; and the victorious enemy, approaching from all quarters, had ranged his battalions close to the front of their redoubts. The morrow of a gloomy evening was fixed on for the attack. The manœuvres of the republicans gave certain intimation of this, and the dawn was ardently watched for by their daring and desperate opponents. Every movement was known in the village, and reported accurately by Jeannette to the inquiring La Coste. His resolution may be anticipated. He was determined, at all hazards, to quit his conceal-

ment, and make an effort to join the republican army. Jeannette made no opposition: she knew it would be vain; and the certainty of losing him deprived her of all power of argument or entreaty. She passively assented to his plans. A leaden apathy seemed to weigh her down. As evening closed in, her oppression increased, mixed with a breathless gnawing anxiety of which she knew not the meaning. Who can define it; yet who has not felt it at the heavy hour of hopeless separation?

It became quite dark, and a heavy rain poured down as if expressly to increase the facilities for the escape. The old woman had retired to bed, in the hope of snatching some repose from the constant agitation which preyed upon her. Jeannette had prepared a little repast for La Coste, but when she offered him to eat he could not touch it! This sudden failure of appetite was no trifling proof of sensibility. Jeannette knew better than any one how to measure its force; she felt it fully, and could not restrain her tears. But she turned from him, lest he should observe or be infected by her

weakness. She opened a drawer, and taking from it a small leather purse, which contained all the earnings of her several weeks' work, she put it into his hands. He refused it by every declining gesture, for he was unable to speak; but she insisted by entreaties, silent but yet so powerful, that he at last consented, and placed it in his bosom, saying, "Until to-morrow, since it must be so." Had he known it to have contained the whole of her little store, would he, on any terms, have been persuaded to accept it, or have suffered any hope, however sanguine, to have made him risk the contingencies of the morrow? I think not.

The final moment of parting was at hand. La Coste saw clearly the workings of Jeannette's despair. They pained him, but he had no reciprocity in her pangs. He was more and more impatient to depart, for he felt not that desperate enjoyment which leads the lover to cling on in agonized procrastination to the misery of such a moment. Jeannette was not so utterly involved in her own sorrow as not to see the actual extent of his, or the delicacy

which still kept him near her. She made one struggle: she opened the little window. He eagerly caught the permission thus given him, and stepped out into the garden. She pointed once more to the path leading to the wood, where he trusted to find an opening beyond the extent of the royalist lines. He pressed her chill hands to his lips, and tenderly uttered, "God bless you, my preserver! expect me to-morrow." She faintly whispered, "Adieu!" and in a moment he was lost in the darkness. The pattering of the rain drowned even the sound of his footsteps. The shock was instantaneous, and poor Jeannette sunk back in a chair, quite stupefied with sorrow.

The dawn was fearfully ushered in. Cannon and musketry heralded its earliest beam: Jeannette started at the first discharge, from a state of several hours unconsciousness. She knew not if she had slept, for no dream had left its shadowy trace on the monotony of her repose. She had been, perhaps, in waking insensibility—no memory of her thoughts remained to mark the hours. All that she recollected was the

parting movement of La Coste, and his gentle murmur, "Expect me to-morrow." Her first impulse was to spring forward to the window, as in hope to catch another glimpse of his retreating form—but the flash of morning light just breaking o'er the heavens, struck her back in shocked amazement. How had the night elapsed, and where was *he*? The thundering roll of the artillery gave reply, and the reality rushed upon her with that overpowering abruptness which seems to stifle thought, while, at the same time, it gives new nerve to the mind's energies. She flung open the cottage door, and, as if every feeling was absorbed in the one great object of discovering *him*, she ran at her utmost speed to the nearest rising ground in the direction of the battle. As she reached the summit of the little hill, shouts of triumph broke upon her. She saw the women of the royalist army, with frantic yet joyous gestures, waving handkerchiefs, dancing, singing; while, in a cloud of smoke below, she distinguished the great body of the Vendéans rushing on the republican lines, and sweeping every thing

before them. Their impetuosity had led them to anticipate the meditated attack, and scarcely had the opening roar of the redoubts commenced, when they precipitated themselves from their position with a movement as unlooked for as it was resistless. The chiefs knowing how to profit by this impulse—and which was, indeed, their only knowledge in the arts of war—threw themselves before the troops with their accustomed gallantry. The republicans kept up awhile a murderous fire, but they were every where broken. The advantages of one side, and the disorder of the other, were, however, but temporary. The courage of the republicans was unshaken, and after a little breathing time given by a moment's check which their violent antagonists experienced, they turned round with all the steadiness of veterans, and changed the fortune of the day. The Vendéans fell back, but not in flight. They opposed no well-trained masses to the advance of the enemy's columns, but flinging themselves behind the hedges in scattered groups, they forced their opponents to attack

them in detail, and the fight became a bloody struggle of man to man. When personal prowess is the sole resource between foes equally brave, and alike enthusiastic in their respective causes, it is numbers alone which can be expected to decide the contest. This preponderance was at the side of the republicans, but their superiority in tactics was here of no avail. Their generals even were obliged to abandon their knowledge of manœuvring, of discipline, and command, to combat foot to foot with some sturdy peasant, who forced them, by his way of fighting, to acknowledge his equality. The Vendéans at length abandoned the valley, and as they more rapidly retreated up the rising ground, the panic-struck females fled towards the village, uttering the most fearful shrieks. One alone remained: it was Jeannette, who stood in silent and awful observation. From the moment in which she had reached the summit of the hillock, her eyes had been fixed on the scene of blood below her. Fear never entered her heart: its

whole emotions seemed changed from their usual course. She heard the angry voice of the combat—the whistling of the bullets—the clash of swords—the groans of anguish, without any one of those heart-sinking sensations which used to be excited by the most trifling sounds of danger or suffering. The only tone which seemed to impress itself upon her was the parting murmur of La Coste. “Expect me to-morrow,” was ever self-repeated in her brain; and in spite of improbability, of danger, and even of death, she clung with unshaken certainty to the fulfilment of the expectation. Her vacant stare looked for him in every group of desperate combatants. It rested the longest wherever the deadliest feats of valour were acting—for something told her that there should be his place. When a republican soldier fell to earth, she sickened with apprehension; but if one of her own party dropped under the blows of his antagonists, she felt on the contrary a sort of throb something quite different from pain. Jeannette, once or twice, during

her terrible suspense, was startled and shocked at this state of feeling. She had not, however, time to enter into its analysis, nor have I.

A general and overwhelming charge, which the open nature of the upland ground allowed the republicans to make, carried the broken parties of the Vendéans before it, as a shattered herd borne along by the flooding of some mighty stream. The mingled mass rolled onward towards the village, and Jeannette was hurried with it, stunned and almost stifled by the noise and pressure of the throng. The Vendéans seemed actuated by a single soul, for each individual, as he extricated himself from the multitude, made towards the church, as if in search of safety from its protection, or in determination to die under its venerated walls. The body of the building was already filled to suffocation, for the curé was within, celebrating mass to a mixed and melancholy congregation of distracted women, wounded and desperate soldiers, and those sick and fainting wretches who occupied their miserable beds in this hospital sanctuary. The little band of native warriors,

headed by the seigneur, made a bold stand to save their village from the pollution of the foe, and allowed an opportunity to the great retreating body to form a deep and solid circle round the church. Bent there upon their knees, or stretched prostrate on the earth, they invoked the aid of Heaven, and filled with momentary enthusiasm, they rushed again to the fight in renewed and firmer resolution. But the numbers of the enemy forced back all resistance, and advancing into the village, they commenced their horrid system of warfare, by setting fire to the cottages in successive order. That of our heroine being the very first on the course of the rivulet running parallel with the road, was one of the first in flames. She saw the faggots placed around it—the smoke and the fire burst up. She shuddered: she would have screamed, but her voice seemed choking her in every effort to articulate; and as the door began to crackle in the blaze, she fancied she heard from within the faint murmur of a female voice! It might be so—for from that hour she never saw her grandmother, and she never

knew her fate. The fragile framework of the rustic habitation was soon a blaze. The republicans rushed on through the fiery wreaths which rolled out on all sides, and the shrieks of the women and children, with the deeper execrations of the furious villagers, rose up like the discordant yells which poets have imagined to burst from Pandemonium, and mixed themselves with the triumphant shouts of their fierce assailants. Every hope seemed lost to the Vendéans. They were borne backwards even beyond the church; and the foremost of the enemy, with sacrilegious hands, applied their torches to the consecrated walls. The crumbling wood-works, dried by the heats of a hundred summers, caught quickly the assailing flames. The horror-struck congregation sent forth one tremendous cry, and precipitated themselves on the incendiaries without. The rush was terrific. The republicans offered no resistance, for the demoniac passions of the day gave way to the natural humanity of the French heart. They could not raise their weapons against the flying crowd, but saw them scatter

cross the fields without firing a single shot to increase the panic which impelled them.

At this instant the ceremony of the mass was finished. The curé had, with unruffled solemnity, performed its sacred mysteries, amidst all the appalling sounds which rose around him. He now descended the steps of the altar, and bearing aloft the chalice, containing the ingredients which the faith of such a being has almost the power to dignify into the reality of his sublimed imagining, he followed the impulse of the escaping concourse; and as the latest fugitive passed the wide-spreading blaze, he issued from the porch in all the majesty and might of holiness. He spoke not, but stopping for an instant, looked full upon the thousands of armed men who circled the little eminence. The effect was magical. The whole, as if struck by an electric pang, turned from him and fled. No voice was raised to stay them. No standard uplifted around which they might rally. All mingled in indiscriminate rout. The Vendéans saw this inexplicable scene. It appeared to them to exceed the possibilities of

human influence, and they attributed the miracle to the immediate interposition of the Deity. The thought darted through them like inspiration; and, following their chiefs, whose efforts to reanimate them had been unceasing, they rushed once more around the church. The curé advanced, surrounded by the flames which the enthusiasm of his ardent observers converted into a halo of celestial glory; and with the utmost energy which his feeble frame allowed, he sang the chorus of their battle song. The wide air rang with the congregated bursts from every individual voice, and the torrent poured onwards. The Vendéans were stopped at every step by heaps of their dead comrades, who had fallen on the enemy's advance; but the speed of their vengeance overtook its victims, and a horrid carnage ensued. Frightful as these scenes are in themselves, there are times when they borrow from circumstances a character of exaggerated atrocity—and this was one. When the business of death is wrested, in a measure, from the agents to which

its infliction seems appropriate; when men consign the work of slaughter to feeblcr hands; when woman bears her part in the battle; and childhood sports among the bodies of the slain, and dabbles its innocent fingers in their blood.

The village was soon cleared of the hated intruders, but a strong reserve, posted on the heights by the wary and experienced Westermann, arrested again the advance of the Vendéans, and finally turned the scale of victory against them. Still, however, they pressed onwards; and foremost among the brave was the seigneur, who seemed actuated by the feeling that courage, on such ground, was his more peculiar privilege. He bore the banner in his left hand, and, with his sword, carved for himself a passage through the thickest of the fight. Jeanette, borne by the current of the crowd, saw him one instant separated by a circle of the enemy from his companions, and fighting with desperate valour. In the next, the white flag sunk below the heads of the combatants, and when her gaze again fixed upon its hapless

bearer, she saw him carried towards the village in the arms of four of his own soldiers, mangled and lifeless.

With the death of their beloved chieftain, and the fall of the banner, seemed to sink the hearts of its supporters. Actual flight was incompatible with the valour of their officers—La Roche-Jacquelin, Lescure, de Marigny, Bonchamp, are names which warrant this assertion; but they nevertheless fell back, fighting step by step their bloody way. Jeannette, whose personal fears and hopes were merged in the general horrors around her, forgot all private feeling, and thought her heart would break at the contemplation of the universal misery. She put up some short irregular prayers, and experienced, what most of us have sometime or other felt, the ineptitude of stated and stately invocations to scenes of imminent alarm. Her whole thoughts seemed to turn towards the saintly man who in this hour appeared, by his profession as well as his virtues, to approach the nearest to that power in whom alone was hope for safety. She hurried to and

fro across the battle field, and often—alas ! how often—turned shuddering from the hacked and bleeding victims of the direful day ; from the ferocious enemy howling forth his curses as he died ; or the acquaintance or friend stiff in death, and consuming in the blaze of his own cottage. At length she caught a glimpse of the holy father, and flying over many a horrible impediment, she threw herself on her knees beside him, and sought to cover herself with the skirt of his mantle. He was bending over a wounded republican, and in the glow of piety administering the sacred rites of the church to the expiring sinner. He was surrounded by a heap of dead and dying. Several of the latter, of both parties, made straining efforts to crawl towards him. Some with piercing shrieks demanded his aid ; while others, unable to articulate the wish, fixed their glazed looks upon him, as if the very beam of his eye poured consolation to their souls. The pressure of the enemy increased each moment, and a thickening shower of balls flew round the spot. Jeanette, forgetting in her fright the sacredness of

his occupation, and the veneration with which she was wont to look upon the priest, flung her arms around him, and in an agony of agitation implored him to save her. He turned calmly round, recognized her, and pointing his finger to Heaven, just uttered, "My child—" when his voice ceased, and falling from her faint embrace, he sunk to earth. Two bullets of a well-directed volley had pierced his breast, and forced the life-blood from his innocent heart. The warm stream covered the garments of Jeannette. She gazed a moment on his outstretched body, and then ran in frantic agony towards the home where instinct seemed to point her steps.

Unhurt, almost by miracle, she hurried through the scorched and suffocating air, in the direction of what was once the cottage. Its position alone enabled her to recognize it now, for not a half of the walls reared their blackened remains above the still-burning heap of rubbish. The garden was utterly destroyed. The vines which used to hang so gracefully above the door were now leafless and shrivelled;

and the branches of the beautiful acacias, which had so long shaded the roof, parched, shrunk, and crackling in the column of smoke which half hid their deformity. Many other sad and striking contrasts to its former state were offered to the miserable girl by the present desolation of her only home. She paced its limited extent, and sought, amidst its ruins, for her old and helpless relative, but in vain. Not even a vestige of the homely furniture had escaped the flames—all was consumed. Jeannette, giving way to a burst of utter agony, covered her face with her hands, and sank upon the smoking heap.

The clamour of the fight was gradually retiring. The still-prolonged struggle had left the village behind it, but many stragglers were flitting across the road, whose fierce and haggard looks might have suited the worst of the spirits of ill. Jeannette once more looked up, but not in hope. A mechanical movement, rather than an effort of the will, made her fix her gaze on the desolate scene around her. She had no longer aught to look for, for he alone on whom her thoughts could dare to rest

had either fallen in the fray or forgotten her. What, then, was her astonishment to see a republican soldier following the course of the little rivulet, as if its windings were his guide towards her, while, as he approached her, he pronounced her name ! The voice was weak and hoarse—speaking exhaustion and pain. She thought she had never before heard it, yet whose could it be but *his* ? She sprang upon her feet, and ran to meet him. When he perceived her, he increased his speed, and she saw, in his elastic bound, the ardour and animation of youth. He was too distant to allow of her distinguishing his features, but the image stamped upon her memory filled up the interval between her and him. She saw that he held his hand above his head, as if to mark to her that it contained some object destined for her. She involuntarily expanded her arms as though he were close to her embrace, when at the instant of his springing across the rivulet to cut off a turn which retarded his approach, a party of three or four Vendéans, retreating to the wood, discharged their carbines at him, and he fell

dead into the stream. Jeannette heard the report of the volley, and saw him fall, but could not—would not believe he was to rise no more. She flew to the spot. He had fallen on his face. His arms were extended before him on the bank; one hand holding firmly his musket, and the other Jeannette's leathern purse. She shuddered with a mixture of every horrible sensation as she gazed on this testimony of honour, feeling, and, she would have thought, affection. But even in this hour of anguish, reason made itself heard to check the latter belief. Scarcely conscious of what she did, she stepped into the stream, and raised the body up. At this moment the murderers reached the spot; and, in defiance of her entreaties, shrieks, and struggles, two of them forced her with them to the wood, while another rifled the body, and then flung it again indignantly into the water.

Arrived at the skirts of the wood, Jeannette cast back one glance upon the fatal spot where all her hopes were buried. She distinguished nothing but the smoke curling above the cot-

tage ruins, and the more distant blaze uprising from the church. Just as her conductors hurried her into the concealment of the trees, the roof of the sacred building fell in with a loud crash, and the yell which came down the wind announced the ferocious joy of its destroyers.

The contents of the purse were soon divided. Jeannette was offered some of her own money, but she shrank back from its acceptance. All that she asked for and procured, was the black silk handkerchief, which she thought she recognized, and a scrap of paper, on which something was written unintelligible to Jeannette as well as the group around her. She felt, however, a tender expectation of finding some one capable of reading its contents; she knew not that La Coste possessed the accomplishment of being able to write. He had never said he did. But in her present wretchedness she dwelt on this proof of his modesty with a comfortless kind of satisfaction, of the same nature with that which she felt in the possession of this scrap of his original composition—for other she never thought it. She placed the paper in her

bosom, and tied the handkerchief round her throbbing head. For some hours she wandered in the skirts of the wood with her companions, and heard with indifference the various lamentations and threats of vengeance muttered against their victors. The evening fell at length. She took advantage of the dusk, left her companions, and emerged from the thicket. She soon arrived on the banks of the rivulet. She hastened towards the memorable spot. Bodies were scattered there in sad abundance, but it was impossible to distinguish any one amongst the heaps. The stream rippled redly on;—faint groans issued from the dying wretches washed by its sanguined waters—no other sounds were heard except the moaning of the evening breeze, and the broken murmurs of an impatient and gloomy band of republicans, to whom had devolved the task of burying their fallen friends. They were busily at work, and the echo of their spades, striking the branches of trees, stones, and other obstacles, fell upon the ear of Jeannette as a fitting consummation of this most terrible day. She tottered towards

the ruins of the cottage. Faint, and sick at heart, she had just strength enough left to reach the spot, when she fell down exhausted, and as she thought expiring.

She lived, however, to see other, and, perhaps, more wretched days; for with the morrow came that loneliness of heart which follows the loss of happiness, unsupported by the stimulating anguish, whose violence seems to lift us above the reach of despair. The hour of earliest suffering is certainly not that of greatest sorrow—for in the first the intensity of the feeling weakens its effect. The heart-strings seem drawn up in defiance of actual pain; and the shock falls down with such a general pressure, that no individual sensation has power to attribute it to itself. But when the mind relaxes from this tension, and the memory can take in the blessings we have lost, as well as the infliction which destroyed them, then comes the reign of indescribable distress; when the heart seems balanced in a cold and desolate void—as if no blood ran through it, and no fibre touched it. Such were the waking feelings of Jean.

nette when the hot sunbeams shone upon her wretchedness. Parched, cold, feverish, and forlorn, she raised her heavy head to meet the light. She left her retreat, and turning to the rivulet, would have quenched in its quiet stream the fire which seemed consuming her. Arrived at the brink, she shrank back in unspeakable disgust on seeing the water still tinged with the blood of the preceding day. She next turned her steps towards the village.—The village! It existed, alas! no more. All traces of resemblance were gone by. The houses were every one destroyed; whole gardens rooted up; trees cut into pieces by the shots; branches shorn away and scattered on the ground: the very earth transformed into a monument of ruin; the road and the fields furrowed alike into one mass of mud, and strewn with the yet unburied bodies of the Vendéans, and all the accumulated fragments of the battle. No living thing relieved the desolation, or bore witness to the dreary scene.

Jeannette proceeded in the direction of the château, which lay at the further extremity of

the village. She soon perceived it, and to her utter surprise it was entire. Smoke issued from its tall, dark chimneys, but it was the token of good cheer, and not destruction. As she approached, a ruffian-looking republican rushed out, and, in a ferocious tone, demanded what she wanted. She nearly sunk to the earth, and lost all use of speech. He again fiercely addressed her, and placed his bayonet to her breast, with horrid imprecations asking of what party she was. Every sense of recollection left the affrighted girl, who, almost unconscious of his question, muttered instinctively the word most familiar to her lips and feelings, "Royalist." He did not kill her, but seizing her by the hair, he dragged her into the château, where a small guard had been left by the victors, the great body of whom had directed their march to Nantes, while a single division was detached in pursuit of the broken and dispersed Vendéans. The officer in command of the château, hearing the charge against Jeannette, ordered her to be thrust into a hovel in the

court-yard, where a miserable remnant of the villagers were confined.

When she saw herself among these old friends of her happiest days, and now the companions of her ruin, a something like pleasure seemed to break upon her. They had, however, little to communicate but sighs, tears, and lamentations. A night was passed in this monotony of woe. They were furnished with a scanty supply of coarse food, which served but to irritate the hunger that, in spite of romance, will force its way through the deepest suffering.

At day-break they were all summoned out to the court-yard, prepared for any fate, and indifferent to all. But Death had not yet closed with his victims. They were brought forth, and having each received a portion of bread, they set off, escorted by the guard of the château, on the road to Nantes, which was, they were informed, their final destination. They proceeded silently and sullenly on. As they quitted the long-loved spot for ever, the villagers, with a simultaneous movement, turned round their

heads. They saw enough in one glance to satisfy their despair. To complete the picture of the preceding days, the château was now in flames, its relentless conquerors having resolved to leave no vestige of the village undestroyed. It was thus these warriors marched through their native land—desolation the monument of their victories, and a desert the resting-place of their renown.

As the party proceeded, the track of their precursors was easily distinguished. Ruins, havoc, and death, choked up the passage of the roads; but not one surviving wretch was found to tell the fate of his fellows. They emerged, at length, from the woody fastnesses of La Vendée, and, reaching the gently-winding Sevre, the fine varieties of nature burst, for the first time, on the prisoners, but not in beauty. Their woe-worn hearts could ill participate in the enjoyments of such scenes; and what is loveliness if sympathy responds not to its charms? How vainly may the richest view expand itself before our gaze—how ineffectual are the grandest

exhibitions of combined magnificence, if the soul is unattuned by inward preparation ! We call this landscape beautiful, or that sublime—phrases of form, conventional terms agreed on between men—but through the widest range of loveliness or splendour, we find nothing with power to stamp its meaning on us if our susceptibilities are not in unison to receive the impress. Such was not the case with the unhappy outcasts whose route I am now following. To mark the various feelings of their lone and agitated minds would be a sad and difficult task. With my hapless heroine every thought was paralysed and plunged in dead indifference. For her the Loire, upon whose banks the third day brought them, flowed unobserved. The acclivities by which it is bordered, with all their scattered ornaments—castles, abbeys, villages, and hamlets—uprose around her, but in vain. The frequent vineyards, in their picturesque positions, planted on the steep rocks which hang over the water's edge, and showing often from their mass of foliage the habitation of the

vigneron hewn in the breast of the calcareous cliff—all these sweet combinations were lost upon the desolate Jeannette.

Another night, and Nantes displayed itself to view. Could any thing have awakened the sympathy of the suffering girl, it had surely been the first glance of this beautiful town: stretching its broad front along the banks of the river; its fine quay, with a double colonnade of noble trees, skirting the wide and transparent stream, on the surface of which islands of verdure fling their reflected shadows, and give to the water an apparent depth, which, however, it does not possess. But the very shallowness of this charming river is to me one of its chief beauties; and I love to look on its pebbly bed, and see, in the summer season, the scattered sand-banks rising over its rippling wave, and covered with basking groups of cattle, or sportive bands of children.

The mournful troop marched on. During their long route, the roughness of their escort seemed to be hushed by the influence of pity. The prisoners were allowed to totter on, with-

out any aggravation from insult or ill-treatment ; but as they now approached the grand dépôt of crime and cruelty, their conductors seemed to gain a new ferocity in the anticipation of that they went to meet. Their approach to the barriers was quickly announced through the fauxbourg, and a crowd of idle ruffians came out to pour their bitter and terrific welcomes. Jeannette was nearly dropping from exhaustion, covered with dust, and at no time of a prepossessing appearance. Her figure was singled out as the particular mark of ribaldry and sarcasm. She bore it all, however, with a forbearance not likely to be shaken, for it was founded on despair.

It was noon when she and her friends, the very refuse of wretchedness, arrived at the public square of Nantes, on their way to the prison to which they were destined. The accumulating crowd seemed to gather fury as their numbers increased ; bad passions gaining strength from association, as virtuous feeling thrives in singleness and solitude. The dissuasions and efforts of the guards could hardly

protect the poor Vendéans from the violence of the rabble. The hootings and revilings heaped on them drew additional tormentors from every street they passed; but, in justice to the humane and respectable portion of the population, it should be stated, that it was *but* the rabble who joined in this and similar persecutions. The town of Nantes may, in this instance, be fairly taken as an epitome of all France; for in the one, as well as the other, it was the dregs of society who stamped by their atrocities, the character of infamy which has attached itself to both. They got the upper hand, and used it. May the terrible truth carry down its moral with it!

As the prisoners were hurried along, many a stifled sigh was given for their fate; many a silent prayer put up in their behalf, and even some remonstrances offered in their favour. But all was alike unknown by Jeannette and her companions; nor was any thing capable of arresting their attention, till, rising above the heads of the multitude, one object struck upon their sight, and for the first time broke their

lethargy. It was the guillotine! not silent, motionless, unoccupied—but at work in all the fulness of its terrors, and surrounded by the worst of revolutionary excitements.

The villagers were led in triumphant procession through every quarter of the town. As they passed along the quay, scattered parties of the populace were shouting in joyous acclamations, as some boats, filled with people of both sexes, put off from the shore. Were these the enthusiastic adieus of affection, blending with the winds to waft its objects safely over the waves? No—a desperate enjoyment was mixed with the hoarse sounds, unlike the faint farewell of tenderness and friendship. What meant the answering shrieks sent forth from every boat—the fierce struggles of frantic women and despairing men, visible to the astonished eyes of the Vendéans? Could these be the expressions of departing love tearing itself from those who had long filled the breasts of the unhappy crews? No, no; it is not thus that parting scenes are signalized; not thus that inevitable, or even sudden, separations affect

the traveller, of whom hope anticipates the return. Alas ! it was the *noyades*, whose frightful festival was now in celebration. Those bloodless butcheries, those quiet massacres, which first stole upon the victims in all the seduction of tranquillity, but which, when betrayed to their discovery, came more shocking than the direst preparations for slaughter.

The day was closing in upon these horrid scenes, when the prisoners flung themselves upon their heaps of straw in the gloomy prison called *L'Entrepôt*. Each hour which brought them nearer to their end showed them the terrible novelties of life. Dungeons and shackles, and blood and blasphemy, surrounded them. The night passed by in darkness ; but the din of agonised despair—the clank of chains—the echoing of clenched fists against the half-distracted head—the laugh of maniac fear—the wailing of the weak—the imprecations of the violent—the deep breath of the sleepers, for even *there* was sleep—the death rattle in the throats of those who thus cheated the monsters

of the morrow,—these were the combinations that filled up the creeping hours.

The grated portal was thrown open with the dawn, and the anxious guards rushed in. Their first care was to remove the bodies of the happy few who had died during the night; and these were dragged forth with indignities which fell on the sympathizing survivors, not on them! Next came the selection of the victims of the day. Many were hurried out as their names were successively called over. For the females of the lately arrived group, one chance of life remained. It was permitted to each republican soldier to choose from among the condemned one woman to be acknowledged as his wife. The same privilege existed with regard to children; and, being exercised with unbounded humanity, many an adopted infant of Royalist, and often of noble blood, has been ushered to the world; and numbers, no doubt, at this moment exist as the reputed offspring of revolutionary parents.

Upon every new arrival in the prisons, the

well-disposed of the soldiery came in to exercise this right, and a party now waited for admission.

When the previously allotted victims were drawn out for execution, this band of expectants were ushered in. They entered quickly on their scrutiny; but being actuated by humanity much more than passion, the selection was not a matter of difficulty or delay. All the women of the little group were instantly chosen forth but one. Need I name her? Who could have chosen Jeannette? It was impossible. She was looked at but to be turned from; and showing no sort of interest in her own fate, she excited the less regard from others. She finally remained behind with three or four men, for whom there was no hope. Of these, two saw their wives led forth in the possession of their respective claimants; and, dead to every feeling of their own fate, they now called for death with an eager alacrity—throwing themselves at the feet of the soldiers, embracing their knees, and calling down blessings on the preservers of

those for whom alone they ever thought of life.

One by one the prisoners disappeared, either to be sacrificed or saved. Jeannette, who lay extended in a remote and darkened corner of the room, insensible to what was passing, at length raised her head, and looking round the chamber, found that she was alone. Horrible as was her solitude, it gave her some relief. She felt free to give vent to the accumulated anguish of so many days, and she, not unwillingly, discovered that her cheeks were flooded with tears. She gave herself up to the full abandonment of her sorrow, and sobbed and sighed aloud. The centinel who paced outside the grating heard the unexpected sounds, for he thought the chamber totally untenanted. He entered, and saw the miserable figure of our heroine reclined upon her straw. Astonished at the oversight which had left her behind, he approached and gently raised her up. He asked, in soothing terms, for his heart was touched, "Why had she not been brought

out with the other prisoners?" She knew not why. "Had she no friend in Nantes?" She had no friend any where. "Did she know any republican, civil or military?" She never knew but one, and he was now dead. "What was his name?" "La Coste." "Where did he die?" "He was killed in La Vendée." "Had she any memorial of his which might be recognised by his friends?" "Yes, a black silk handkerchief"—taking it from her head, and handing it to the soldier. "Only *this*? nothing more?" "Oh! yes, some of his handwriting"—producing the scrap of scribbled paper. The soldier rejecting the first rather questionable token of identity, took the latter; uncreased, refolded, smoothed, and looked at it attentively, in hopes of its affording some clew by which to discover who was the writer. While he was thus occupied, Jeannette felt as if her existence was renewed; as if another spring had burst out in the desert of her bosom; and being instinctively impressed with the belief that she now might learn the sentiments of him whom she had so tenderly loved, she entreated the

soldier to read the manuscript aloud. But while the centinel prepared to read, the clattering of footsteps broke in upon her reverie, and the jailor, with some soldiers of the guard, quickly entered the room. With violent execrations they accused the centinel of having purposely concealed Jeannette, while he on his part retorted the reproach upon the jailor. The security of the victim was, however, the surest means of reconciliation. The dispute was soon arranged, and our heroine handed over to the accompanying guard, with directions to hurry her to the quay, where her companions waited only her arrival to proceed to *embarkation* ! They seized her, and hastened her onwards, her face besmeared with a concrete of dust and tears ; her clothes torn and disordered ; her hair dishevelled and loose upon her shoulders, for the handkerchief which had bound it was left behind in the prison. All these concurrent disfigurements heightened her natural defects, and in this state she reached the boat. Several of the old and condemned of both sexes were already embarked, but not

one female with the least pretensions to youth was there. She was pushed over the side by the guards, and received on board by the ready executioners with a shout of mockery. The preparations being all completed, the boatmen were in the very act of pushing from the shore, when a young soldier, flushed and panting, forced his way through the crowd; plunged into the water, seized the prow of the boat, and cried out loudly, "Hold! I am not too late. I choose that girl for my wife." The object of his choice shrieked on seeing him, and as he held forth his arms to receive her, she sunk fainting on the floor. The guards, the prisoners, the lookers on, were all for a moment mute. The scene was so quick, and the choice so inexplicable, that no time was given for comment, conjecture, or opposition. A moment more and the boat pushed off—but lightened of its wretched freight, for the insensible Jeanette was borne triumphantly to land, in the nervous arms of the grateful and generous La Coste.

I must not now linger on my narrative, the

interest of which I know to be nearly over. Little remains to be told, and that little shall be shortly despatched. La Coste hastened to explain to his astonished Jeannette, who soon recovered her senses, on his bosom, that on the morning after their parting, he had succeeded in safely making his way to the outposts of the republican army, where he arrived just as the battle began; that he had escaped unhurt during the whole of that dreadful day; that at the close of the fight, when victory was no longer doubtful, the division to which his regiment belonged was ordered off to Nantes by a route different from the village; and that in the moment of his departure, finding the impossibility of making his way to the cottage, whose half consumed ruins he saw smoking from the heights, he had intrusted to a chosen comrade the task of seeking it, of relating his safety to Jeannette, if she still lived, and of delivering her the purse which might have been so useful.

I must not attempt to describe the sensations of our heroine on hearing this wondrous recital; nor the grief of La Coste on learning the fate

of his friend. He went on, however, to state that, arrived at Nantes, he had been too particularly occupied to know of the approach of the poor remnant of the villagers, whom report had stated to have every soul perished in the sack and conflagration of their homes, but that he had heard within a few minutes of her adventure, and ascertained her identity, in a chance conversation with the sentry of the prison, a man wholly unknown to him, who was relating the circumstances to a group of his fellow soldiers. He said that he had but one line of action to pursue. He promptly followed it—and she was now his nominal wife.

He kept the girl with him under this title for three months, but no ceremony had made them one. He treated her, however, with a tenderness and respect more than is to be found in many a legitimate union; but Jeannette clearly perceived that gratitude was the only spring which actuated his bosom with regard to her. She had never hoped for more, nor reckoned on so much; yet satisfied and even happy, she had some moments of alarm when

she reflected that stronger feelings might sometime or other break the ties which thus bound them together. Her apprehensions, and the strength of his attachment, were soon put to the test, for invasion just then advanced on every side; and his regiment, among others, was ordered to the frontiers at a notice of one day. Jeannette, feeling that she had no further claim upon him; that he had overpaid the service she had rendered him; and that such a wife as she was could be but an encumbrance to such a man as he;—told him frankly, that miserable as it would make her, she wished him to consider himself perfectly free; and that being now able to work her own way in the world, she hoped that no delicacy to her would make him risk the ruin of his own prospects in life. La Coste *was* delicately and difficultly placed. I have said that he was handsome and pleasing. His figure and his manners were, in those days of equality, a certain passport to the best—that was the richest—society in Nantes. He was very generally admired, and had been particularly distinguished by the daughter of a

wealthy and violent republican. She was beautiful and accomplished. She had solicited his attentions, and he had even a regard for her person. Had he married her, he was certain of both rank and riches;—but if he did so, what was to become of Jeannette? He summed up in one of those mental moments, which can grasp at a glance such multitudes of calculations, the manifold advantages of such a match.—He then turned towards Jeannette, and though I cannot say that looking on her face made him “forget them all,” I may safely assert, that picturing to himself her forlorn and desolate perspective, he felt some spell strong enough to make him renounce the mighty temptations to abandon her.—The struggle was short, for he married her on the moment, and the next morning they marched off together for the seat of war.—How many ready mouths will exclaim, “He only did his duty!” Would that such duties were more commonly performed!

For twenty-one years La Coste served as a

private soldier. He was brave and well conducted, but he had not the good fortune of promotion. For this entire period Jeannette was his faithful and affectionate wife. She earned, by her industry, sufficient to add some scanty comforts to his barrack-room or his tent. Through Germany, Italy, and Spain, she attended him in many a bloody campaign, and stood unflinching by his side in many an hour of peril and distress; and at length, after all, watched by his death-bed in his native town when peace gave him time to die. They had one daughter, beautiful and good. She, too, married a soldier, who was discharged when war became out of fashion; and following his trade of gardening, he now supports with comfort his wife and five children, and gives refuge to his mother-in-law, whose declining years do not prevent her from usefully exerting her talents as a washerwoman.

I have seen the whole group in a cottage, which I thought happier than some homes of prouder dimensions; or sporting in their garden,

which is as fragrant and flourishing as others surrounding less enviable, though more refined, societies. Jeannette, or, if the reader should prefer the title, Madame La Coste, has not lost her appellation of *La vilaine tête*, and, perhaps, her claim to it is somewhat strengthened by the ravages and wrinkles of increasing age, and the deep bronzing of the southern sun. This tale was given from her own recital, and most likely the reader requires not to be told that my old washerwoman, of the village in Medoc, was herself the identical heroine. If I have sometimes enlarged on the details, or substituted my own language for that of the narrator, I have probably done mischief, when I thought I was embellishing. The effect produced on me was, perhaps too, overrated in my estimate of its possible power on others—while sitting before me in my inn bed-room, my old and ugly washerwoman broke suddenly off from counting my linen to the subject of her own eventful story; and carelessly lolling on her chair, commenced, with the naïveté of a peasant, and in the untranslatable idiom of

La Vendée, to tell her simple tale ; interrupted often by sighs for her husband, her grandmother, and her native village, whose name now hardly exists but in her memory.

END OF VOL. I.

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